

READER



CHICAGO'S FREE WEEKLY SINCE 1971 | NOVEMBER 22, 2018

2018 GIFT GUIDE | USE THIS COVER AS GIFT WRAP

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

MY FIRST ISSUE—six weeks ago—hadn't even hit the streets yet when I got an email from a thoughtful young man inquiring if I had any advice for revitalizing the recently shuttered alt-weekly in his town, and similar notes have been coming from all over the country at a steady pace ever since. There are emails and tweets and comments made in the coffee shop: Chicagoans excited about what's going on, alternative-newspaper-wise, folks elsewhere curious, maybe a little jealous.

I guess it surprises me, if I'm honest. I've been told for so long that print is dead and journalism breathing its last and nobody cares about the independent press anymore and there's no room for the alternative weekly in today's media landscape. The barrage of disinterest has been so steady, the voices that offer dissent so easily discounted. Somehow the message sank in.

Turns out the message was wrong. People all over the country care about alternative news-weeklies, and they care about this alternative newsweekly. They're telling me so themselves. They want the *Reader* to grow, and to thrive, and then they want their own alternative news-weeklies, which they also hope will grow and thrive. I'm not so big on the traditional family holidays, but today I find myself struck dumb with gratitude for the people all over the country who care about independent journalism.

I'm especially grateful for the Chicagoans, of course, and we here at the *Reader* have a little present for you this week. It is this fancy gift wrap on our cover. The gift that keeps on giving! There's also a gift guide, chock-full of local products to put on your shopping (or wish) list. I interview film critic A. S. Hamrah too and our very own Leor Galil wrote an absolutely stunning feature in advance of the John Walt Foundation's fundraiser at Concord Music Hall this weekend. (Leor, by the way, turned 33 last weekend, his Scottie Pippin year. Scottie, if you're reading this, why don't you give the guy a shout-out?) Also, a correction to last week's issue: the host of the Best Worst Drag Show is Arben Dauti.

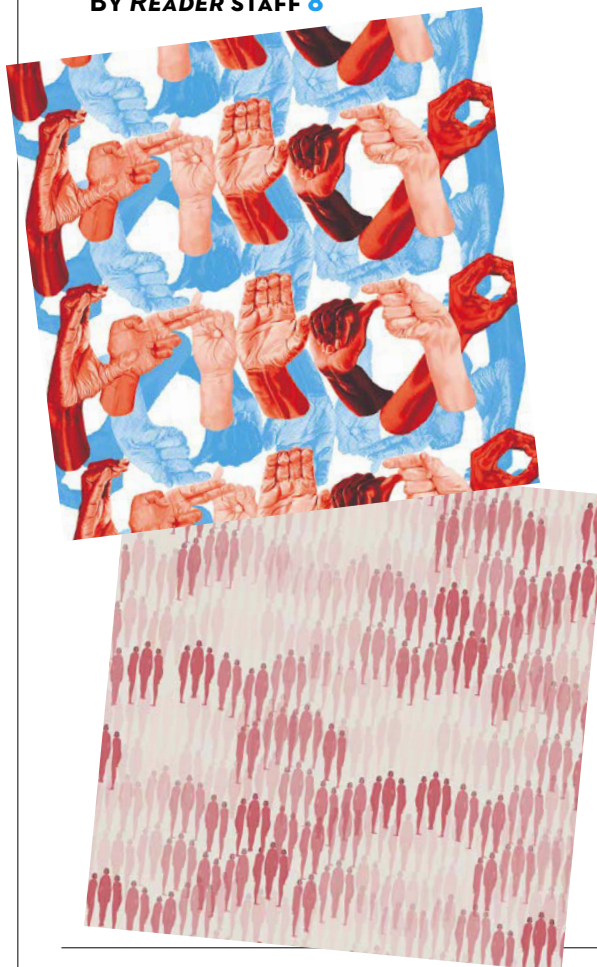
The staff is saddened to have our beloved deputy editor Kate Schmidt home recovering from illness this holiday week. We were further devastated by the killing of Dr. Tamara O'Neal and three other people just a few blocks away at Mercy Hospital as we finalized this issue. Neighbors, Chicagoans, and everyone reading this: we here at the *Reader* love you right back. —**ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE**

FEATURE

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

A staff- and contributor-compiled peek at great local wares

By **READER STAFF 8**



To accompany our gift guide, we commissioned two local artists to create the gift wrap featured on our two variant covers.

Justin Clemons from Chicago Lawn is also the production manager at Magnolia Printing. His gift wrap features hands spelling "C-H-I-C-A-G-O" in American Sign Language. The piece started as a hand study he painted at age 17 in the program After School Matters, and his instructor noted that it evoked the feeling of people being deaf to the youth of Chicago and their issues. Years later, Justin completed the painting in acrylics. It was featured in Black Creativity Juried Art Exhibition hosted at the Museum of Science+Industry Chicago 2014.

Laura Berger is an artist living in Chicago who paints, sculpts, and also animates. Her beautifully minimalistic work often focuses on themes of nature, dreams, or travel. Sometimes, her images feature a host of culturally diverse naked bodies—as appear on one of our variant covers. She is interested in how people create meaning and a sense of belonging to a greater whole.

For More Info on Justin's work: justinianart.com

For More info on Laura's work: lauraberger.com

FILM FEATURE

Critical mass

Film critic A. S. Hamrah on his new essay collection

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MUSIC FEATURE

The legacy of John Walt

A foundation in honor of the beloved hip-hop artist nurtures young talent

By **LEOR GALIL 26**



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CITY LIFE



ISA GIALLORENZO

STREETVIEW

Give us a smiley

Emojis help this security officer cope with a tough day

IF A PICTURE is worth a thousand words, then security officer Vickie Gould, 59, really had a lot to say with her look. "I need a little happiness right now because I just got discharged from my job," she said. "Emojis are just part of me; they mean being happy, different, and noticeable. I'm just a different person—I dare to be different. My style is unpredictable and nobody does it like me." Yet Gould's outfits do seem to have one thing in common: her penchant for meticulously matching accessories. "I am the best coordinator. I can just go into a store and find something that goes with what I already have. It just comes to me." After stating this, Gould gleefully pulled her emoji gloves and emoji folder from her emoji backpack, like they were some kind of secret weapon. "I've got gadgets," she grinned. "Fashion helps me connect with people. Through my outfits I'm always giving that little token of love." —ISA GIALLORENZO

artist, writer, performer?

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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

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POLITICS

Giving Thanks

An expression of gratitude for events—political and local—over the last year

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

For most of the year I rant and rail about the really bad ideas and behavior of our elected officials—and, trust me, I'll get to Mayor Rahm's \$800 million or so Lincoln Yard TIF hand-out in a subsequent column real soon.

But with Thanksgiving just around the corner I figured I'd keep up an old tradition of offering a word or two of gratitude to the people I must be thankful for over the last year.

So without further ado, thanks to . . .

The roughly 2.7 million voters of Illinois who bounced Governor Bruce Rauner from office. Yes, I realize many of you were the same voters who voted him in four years ago. And, yes, it took the deep pockets of J.B. Pritzker, who more than went dollar-for-dollar with Rauner in commercials and still had enough cash left over to buy a \$12.1 million horse farm in Florida. That's real money, folks.

So, good job, Illinois voters. And, J.B., if you come through on your promises regarding legal reefer, progressive taxes, an elected school board in Chicago, and more money for

education—you can buy as many horse farms in Florida as you want.

Terry Cosgrove, executive director of Personal PAC, the reproductive rights group. After Rauner let it be known that he was ready to throw his pro-choice allies under the bus and veto HB-40, Cosgrove helped make such a ruckus that Rauner had to pull a second back flip and sign the abortion-rights bill. That enraged arch-conservative Jeanne Ives so much that she ran against Rauner in the Republican primary—causing a division within the GOP ranks that helped seal Rauner's defeat. Well played, TC.

The 1.3 million Cheeseheads who elected Tony Evers as governor, finally bouncing Scott Walker from office after two terms. Clearly, many were motivated by their disgust at Walker for forking over about \$4.1 billion in public money to Foxconn to build a manufacturing facility in southern Wisconsin. Walker also discarded many environmental oversights, pretty much leaving Foxconn free to pollute our lake and air. And speaking of unwarranted public handouts to gazillionaires who don't need it . . .

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos (in a backhanded sort of way) for saving Chicago and Illinois taxpayers at least \$2.1 billion by taking your HQ2 to New York City and Virginia. The \$2.1 or so billion is the money Mayor Rahm and Rauner were desperately trying to take from our schools, parks, police, etc. and give to Bezos, if he would please (pretty please) come to Chicago.

New York Rep.-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez for saying she didn't necessarily want Amazon to come to her Queens congressional district, even after Bezos "gave it" to them. Well, Bezos didn't actually give the headquarters to New York. He exchanged it for at least \$2.8 billion in various subsidies and tax breaks that Mayor Bill de Blasio and Governor Andrew Cuomo bestowed upon him. Learn from Ocasio-Cortez, Chicago congresspeople—being a good hometown citizen is not the same thing as signing on to every wasteful idea your mayor and governor promote.

Troy LaRaviere, for speaking out against Rahm's wasteful ideas over the last eight years, long before such outspokenness was politically fashionable. Troy recently dropped his campaign for mayor because he didn't have the money to compete and he obviously hated making those fund-raising calls. But we could always use a little more political courage in Chicago. Speaking of which...

Karen Lewis, former president of the Chicago Teachers Union, who retired this year for health reasons. If mayoral candidates like

Amara Enyia, Willie Wilson, Paul Vallas, Garry McCarthy, Lori Lightfoot, and Jamal Green are "gangstas" for having the guts to announce their candidacies before Rahm dropped out of the race, then Karen's the OG, 'cause she stood up to him back in 2011 when most pols were hiding under their desks.

Maria Hernandez, Jesse Hoyt, Ryan Kelleher and all the other young Chicago activists who have steadily embarrassed their elders into, well, if not doing the right thing then at least scrambling to explain why they're not, on issues like police shootings, gentrification, unfair taxes, and that \$95 million TIF-funded police academy. I tease millennials about how all they care about is their iPhones, but I'm just kidding. Though, while I have your attention—how do you make your pictures do that little bouncy thing on Instagram?

Alaina Hampton, Sherri Garrett, and the other courageous voices in the local #MeToo movement who jeopardized their careers by stepping forward to say enough with this bullshit.

Katie and Tim Tuten, co-owners of the endangered Hideout, who rallied a bunch of hipsters to come out in protest over Rahm's aforementioned Lincoln Yard TIF handout. I welcome just about anything that wakes Chicagoans up to the ongoing TIF scam. Finally, on a personal note...

The folks at the Reader, including two of the new leaders, Eileen Rhodes and Tracy Baim, who took me out for a delicious breakfast at Chef Petros restaurant and invited me to stick around while they took over the paper. And to editors Kate Schmidt, Aimee Levitt, Sue Kwong, and Philip Montoro, who kept the *Reader* going during the dark days of the summer when I feared we might go out of business. And to Edwin Eisendrath, my old owner (stick around long enough, and you're going to get a whole bunch of different owners), who put together a team of investors in 2017 that snatched the *Reader* and *Sun-Times* from being purchased and then swallowed up and out of existence by the *Tribune*. And, of course . . .

Reader readers, everywhere, who've been reading us for all these years. We're still here raising hell.

So thank you one and all and onward upward, as they say. We've got a mayor's race to cover and sleazy TIF deals to expose.

Enjoy your turkey, everybody. 🦃

🐦 @BennyJshow

ON CULTURE

Behind the orange door

Inside the Thoma Art Foundation's dazzling collection

By DEANNA ISAACS

Thirty years ago, Bruce Rauner and Carl Thoma were two of four partners in the private equity firm GTCR, which Thoma had cofounded in 1980. They were pioneers in venture capital and leveraged business buyouts, and profited mightily before the partnership broke up in 1998.

Rauner eventually put a chunk of those (and subsequent) profits into a political career, spending nearly \$60 million of his own cash on his losing campaign in this year's governor's race alone.

Thoma, meanwhile, co-founded a new company (now known as Thoma Bravo) and spent some of his money on art. He and his wife, Marilyn Thoma, who've been benefactors to many Chicago cultural organizations, began buying art for their own walls in the 1970s, and over the decades have amassed something much larger. The Thoma Collection now includes more than 1,200 works, spread among four broad categories: digital and electronic, Spanish Colonial, post-World War II painting and sculpture, and Japanese bamboo.

In 2014 they established the Carl and Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation, a nonprofit that operates Art House, a public venue in an adobe house in Santa Fe (where they have a home), and Orange Door, a Chicago facility that's mostly a warehouse.

The Foundation, with assets of \$156 million, also provides financial support for research, publication, exhibitions, and educational programs in its areas of interest, and lends works from its collection to other institutions.

Art House mounts several annual exhibits of mostly digital art and has regular public hours Thursdays through Saturdays. But the low-profile Chicago facility is off the general public radar. It's open only by appointment, and then

on a limited basis, mainly for school groups and curators. And if you happened to pass its vintage building in the Fulton Market warehouse district, you wouldn't guess that it houses a meticulously organized treasure chest.

Last week, however, an open house attended by a few dozen denizens of the local arts community provided a look inside. Some of the treasure was on display in exhibits spread through four small galleries, and some in a larger central space, mostly occupied by row upon row of rolling storage panels, hung cheek-by-jowl on both sides with paintings that range from bumptious Chicago Imagism to imperious 18th century Latin American portraits.

This central space was dominated by a towering, beaded Nick Cave creature (*Soundsuit, 2014*), a Robert Rauschenberg windmill *Eco-Echo*, 1992-'93, and Iván Navarro's walk-in phone-booth-size light-and-mirrors piece, *Reality Show (Black)*, 2010. A quartet of exquisite Japanese baskets sat on a counter next to a vintage jukebox, while, steps away in a black box gallery, 24 million pixels swirled in a universe of nonrepeating patterns across a trio of computer screens, in Leo Villareal's

Particle Field, 2017.

It's a dazzling stash. Walking through the orange door felt like entering a secret clubhouse and finding it stacked with enchanting booty. And it's not unique. As art market values—driven by global investors, international fairs, and a hot auction scene—have skyrocketed and collecting's become, more than ever, the favorite status game of the very rich, there's been a proliferation of new foundation-owned private museums.

Some are small, and they're sometimes housed on the private grounds of their founders; others, like the Broad in Los Angeles or the nearly-in-Chicago Lucas Museum, are huge. The smaller institutions attracted the attention of the Senate Finance Committee a few years ago; there was concern that they might not be offering enough public access to qualify for tax exemption, which is, in effect, a taxpayer-funded subsidy. But, as tax law expert Steven Rosenthal of the D.C.-based Tax Policy Center confirmed in a phone interview last week, nothing substantial has been done, even by Trump's 2017 tax law, to curtail their advantages.

Donations to either an existing public mu-

seum like the Art Institute of Chicago or to your own private museum are tax deductible at market value.

But the Art Institute is fussy about what it'll accept. It might not want your art, and, even if it does—unless you're Stefan Edlis—you probably won't have control over how and when your gift's exhibited. If it's exhibited.

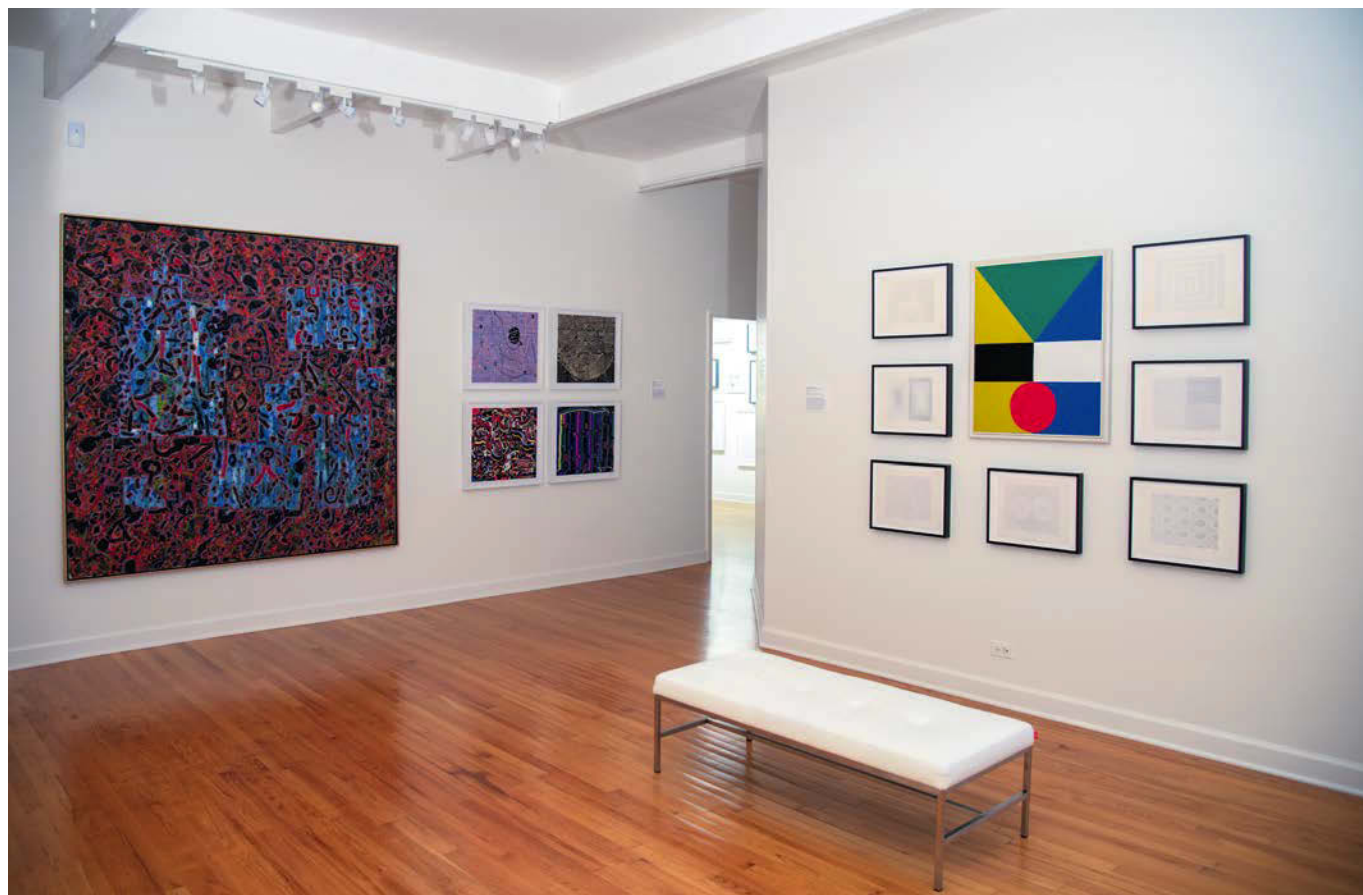
Your own foundation and museum, on the other hand, will likely be pleased to accept your contributions and eager to display them. You'll have to prove to the government that the museum is offering some public benefit—usually by posting public hours or lending out works—but all the expenses of housing and maintaining your collection will also become tax deductible.

This arrangement has been described as the art world version of eating your cake and having it too.

Compared to battling even deeper pockets in the down-and-dirty world of Illinois politics?

Definitely a piece of cake. 

 @Deannalisaacs



Inside the Thoma Art Foundation  JAMIE STUKENBERG

Lyft is driven by its values – wherever they lead

Lyft is built on the power of community. That community is not vanilla — it is comprised of people from diverse backgrounds and beliefs. While Lyft’s goal is to support everyone in its community, that cannot translate into being all things to all people. It means taking a stand behind its values and backing up talk with concrete actions in Chicago and across the U.S.

“Each day we bring thousands of people from diverse backgrounds together to share the ride,” said David Katcher, Lyft’s Midwest General Manager. “And our belief in building a better, more inclusive and more sustainable world has led us to embrace like-minded causes.”

Lyft spoke up when hundreds of immigrants were stranded at airports around the country following the release of new travel restrictions from the U.S. government. The company committed to donate \$1 million over four years to support the ACLU and stand with people of all faiths, creeds, races and identities.

Lyft followed that up by creating Round Up & Donate, an opt-in program that rounds up the fare from every ride to the next whole dollar and donates the difference to a charitable partner of the rider’s choice. To date, Lyft riders have raised more than \$10 million for organizations like World Wildlife Fund, ACLU, Human Rights Campaign, USO, Habitat for Humanity and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

Many of Lyft’s most successful community initiatives have taken place in Chicago. From providing free rides to Chicago’s March for Our Lives, bringing tomorrow’s leaders together at the Obama Foundation Summit, promoting female

ACLU Donation: January 2017

Lyft committed a \$1 million donation to the ACLU to help defend the constitution on the heels of a national travel restriction.



Dinner for New Immigrants: December 2017

Lyft hosted a dinner for refugees fleeing persecution and sent the message that everyone is welcome here.



Department of Defense Warrior Games: June 2017

Lyft provided rides to events all around Chicago for the injured service members competing in the games and their families.





empowerment at We as Women, hosting a welcome dinner for new immigrants at its Chicago headquarters, marching with the LGBTQ community at the Pride Parade, and transporting disabled veterans during the Warrior Games, Lyft has endeavored to make a positive difference to Chicagoans from all walks of life.

Lyft's most enduring impact in Chicago might be its support of public education. Through its ongoing partnership with Chance the Rapper's nonprofit SocialWorks, Lyft and its riders have used Round Up & Donate to raise more than \$100,000

for arts education in Chicago Public Schools — with more donations streaming in by the day.

"Our brand is national, but the most important things we do happen locally," said Katcher. "In a city as diverse as Chicago, our riders and drivers need to know we won't just get them where they need to go. We're also committed to supporting them, their families and the issues they care about most. Lyft will always take a stand to make positive change, however we can."

March For Our Lives:
March 2018

Lyft offered free rides for attendees to March For Our Lives events in Chicago and around the country.



Chance the Rapper/CPS:
October 2018

Lyft announced its partnership with Chance the Rapper to support arts education in Chicago Public Schools raised more than \$100K in its first year.



My Block, My Hood, My City:
December 2017

Lyft hosted students from underserved neighborhoods to show them how they can pursue careers in tech with My Block, My Hood, My City.



Chicago Pride Parade:
June 2018

Lyft supported the LGBTQ community in Chicago at the Pride Parade.

2018 GIFT GUIDE

BY READER STAFF



SELF CARE

1 / Local coffee subscription: Back of the Yards, Dark Matter, or Metric Coffee

Chicago is home to many fine-craft coffee roasters, and many offer subscriptions for a steady supply. One dollar from Back of the Yards Coffee Co.'s 47th Street Blend goes to their Social Impact fund to benefit the neighborhood. Dark Matter Coffee offers three, six and twelve-month subscriptions to their monthly limited blends, and Metric Coffee offers espresso and blend subscriptions as well as a Roasters Choice Subscription and Single Origin Subscription. —**John Dunlevy** [Prices vary](#)

at backoftheyardscoffee.com, darkmattercoffee.com and metriccoffee.com.

2 / Coffee maker N°3 by Manual.is

Manual's newest coffee maker is four usages in one: pour over, French press, cold brew, and a pitcher. With this elegant, hand-blown borosilicate glass vessel, even a person who doesn't drink coffee regularly (me) will savor the ritual of making, and serving coffee. —**Sue Kwong** [\\$140 at Manual Shop & Studio, 3251 W. Bryn Mawr, 312-870-0799, manual.is.](#)

3 / Mushroom tree ornaments by Facture Goods

The handcrafted mushroom Christmas ornaments come in earthy brown clay glazed in gray and flecked with 22-karat gold. They typically sell out in minutes when creator Aron Fischer puts a fresh batch in his online shop. But on November 24 you can find them at Martha Mae in Andersonville during Small Business Saturday. —**Maya Dukmasova** [\\$18 each or \\$60 for a set of four at \[facturegoods.com\]\(http://facturegoods.com\) and on November 24 only at Martha Mae, 5407 N. Clark, 872-806-0988, \[marthamae.info\]\(http://marthamae.info\).](#)

4 / Malort soy candle

Everyone's favorite drink in candle form. —**Vince Cerasani** [\\$30 at \[reuse-first.com\]\(http://reuse-first.com\).](#)

5 / Tellicherry Black Whole Peppercorns from Reluctant Trading Experiment

Pretty amazing pepper from an outfit started by Scott Eirinberg, the entrepreneur who founded, and later sold, The Land of Nod. —Suggested by **Kate Schmidt**, written by Reader staff [Starting at \\$6.50 at \[reluctanttrading.com\]\(http://reluctanttrading.com\).](#)



1/ Houseplant from Foyer

Owner Alma Vescovi wants you to get past your fear of killing houseplants.

—**Maya Dukmasova** Prices vary at [1480 W. Berwyn, 713-994-0302, foyer.shop](#).

2/ Soundwave art, Soundwaves by Mordecai

Kathleen Mordecai turns soundwaves from parts of songs or special moments into sculptures using reclaimed wood.

—**Jamie Ludwig** Starting at \$76 at [etsy.com/soundwavesbyMordecai](#).

3/ Soap Distillery

Soap Distillery may promise “Small batches. No hangovers,” but no such claim can be made about whether these boozy miracles are addictive. Because they are. —**Karen Hawkins** Prices vary at [soapdistillery.com](#).

4/ King Spa & Sauna

The admission fee for this Korean spa covers its series of saunas, soaking pools, food court, and movie theater. —**Aimee Levitt** \$40 at [809 Civic Center Drive, Niles, 847-972-2540, kingspa.com/chicago](#).

5/ Mochimochi Land knitting kits

Forget scarves—Mochimochi Land gives you the tools to show off your needle skills with something truly unique. —**Brianna Wellen** Prices vary at [mochimochiland.com](#).

6/ Mano y Metal handmade accessories

Mano y Metal owner Desiree T. Guzman’s metal jewelry features empowering sayings like “be badass” (*chingona* in Spanish). —**Marissa De La Cerda** Prices vary at [manoymetal.com](#).

7/ The WasteShed Art Supplies

Fuel that winter craft addiction while helping to rescue art (and knitting) supplies from the landfill. —**Jamie Ramsay** Prices vary at [2842 W. Chicago, 773-666-5997, thewasteshed.com](#).

8/ Mermaid lessons at AquaMermaid

Make a loved one’s glorious dream of being a mermaid come true. —**Aimee Levitt** Starting at \$60 at [UIC Sports and Fitness Center, 901 W. Roosevelt Road, 866-279-2767, aquamermaid.com](#).

COMMUNITY CARE

1/ Chicago Community Bond Fund donation

What better way to spread holiday cheer than to help someone in jail get home to their family? CCBF accepts donations large and small to pay bail for those awaiting trial in Cook County Jail. —**Maya Dukmasova** Visit chicagobond.org to see the criteria they use to select whose bail to pay.

2/ Women and Children First gift certificate

This post-#MeToo moment is a really good time to give all the sexist jerks in your life a gift certificate to one of the oldest and most significant women-owned bookstores in the US. —**Anne Elizabeth Moore** Prices vary at 5233 N. Clark, 773-769-9299, womenandchildrenfirst.com.

3/ My City, My Block, My Hood gear

Founded by Jamal Cole, MCMBH is a connectivity-encouraging, mentoring non-profit that focuses on providing underserved teenagers exposure to opportunities beyond their familiar neighborhoods. Twenty percent of all apparel sales go toward their excursions-based Explorers Program. —**Jamie Ramsay** From \$50 for hoodies, \$25 for skullies, at formyblock.org.

4/ Haymarket Books Book Club

Membership provides regular monthly shipments of all the publisher's new titles, in either print or e-book format, plus discounts on everything on the backlist. —**Aimee Levitt** \$20-\$30/month at haymarketbooks.org.

5/ T-Shirt from the Silver Room

I discovered Silver Room when I first saw Eve Ewing wearing a "Make Chicago Great Again" Harold Washington T-shirt at Pitchfork last year. But the store has a lot more to offer, and is full of hand-crafted leather goods, jewelry, and home decor, many by black makers. —**Maya Dukmasova** \$20-\$30 at Silver Room, 1506 E. 53rd St., 773-947-0024, thesilverroom.com.

6/ Rebel Betty Arte prints and zines

Support a Latinx artist this holiday season by buying zines, prints, buttons and other artwork by Rebel Betty, an Afro-Latina artist, DJ, and educator. —**Marissa De La Cerdá** \$5-\$35 for prints, \$5-\$15 for zines, \$10-\$15 for buttons and other items at rebelbettyarte.com.



GOOD TIMES

1 /Hollow Leg cocktail class

Founded by Devin Kidner, Hollow Leg aims to share the art and science behind crafting cocktails so that anyone who attends their events leaves with the knowledge, taste, and skill to finally make a decent drink. —**Jamie Ludwig** \$60-\$95 for gift certificates at hollowleg.com.

2 /Fat Tiger Workshop hat

The simple, bold Fat Tiger hat is a great way to show love for the workshop's four community-driven founding designers, Vic Lloyd, Desmond Owusu, Terrell Jones, and Joe "Freshgoods" Robinson.

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Musician Jen Tabor's hand-cut leather straps, which have helped support the instruments of Jeff Tweedy, Tom Petty, and Kim Gordon, practically have rock-star status of their own.

—**Jamie Ludwig** Prices vary at souldier.us.

4 /Fine Prints cassettes

Founded by Robby Haynes and Ziyad Asrar, Fine Prints has put out only a handful of cassette releases, but the small catalog shows how weird and wonderful Chicago rock can get. —**Leor Galil** \$7 per cassette at fineprints.bandcamp.com.

5 /Sharkula T-shirt

Can you really claim to be a Chicagoan if you've never met Sharkula? —**Leor Galil** Starting at \$30 at 773-647-4995.

6 /Experimental Sound Studio tickets

The concert series in Experimental Sound Studio's cozy live room feature internationally celebrated Chicagoans as well as renowned out-of-towners. —**Philip Montoro** \$40 for a pack of five tickets good for any concerts at 5925 N. Ravenswood, 773-998-1069, ess.org.

7 /Ninja Zombie DVD

In 1992, aspiring writer-director Mark Bessenger filmed a low-budget Super-8 horror comedy in Chicago, the exurbs, and Wisconsin. Last month, Bleeding Skull, a site and film distributor, and the American Genre Film Archive co-released it on DVD. I just hope with this wide release it soon becomes a midnight staple. —**Leor Galil** \$13.99 at americangenrefilm.com/releases/ninja-zombie.



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Critical consensus

Chatting film writing with
critic A. S. Hamrah
By ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

John Carpenter's *Ghosts of Mars* (2001) is not a great film. For one thing, it's more of a movie—there are guns and special effects and pretty ladies and it takes place on Mars—than what we like to call cinema. It's not even a great movie, as it came out a few weeks after September 11, and its procolonization message fails to reflect the cultural zeitgeist of those tumultuous times.

To be honest, *Ghosts of Mars* is probably not even the greatest movie in the Venn diagram crossover of the stars—Ice Cube, Clea Duvall, Pam Grier, and Buckethead—long careers in their various fields. It's silly, mostly, although one could argue that the many scenes of baby-faced Ice Cube spouting vituperative nonsense as he opens fire on baddies with machine guns in both hands does elevate the film somewhat.

Yet it's the film that critic A. S. Hamrah chose to present at Metrograph on new York's Lower East Side during the launch of his collected work of essays, *The Earth Dies Streaming: Film Writing, 2002-2018*, from n+1 Books. So I went. It was a blast. There are few people whose film recommendations I trust more than A. S. Hamrah's.

Hamrah doesn't shy away from calling them movies, for one, and what he seems to like about the cinema is that it can offer good experiences to people. This is refreshing in an era when entertainment writers tend to focus on box-office records. His excellent introduction to *The Earth Dies Streaming* focuses on other flaws and new potential in contemporary film criticism. I asked him to sit down with me, the morning after his book release event, to discuss further.

So I want to talk about the state of criticism.
OK.

According to you, it's not doing very well.

Criticism's not doing that well in any medium, but film criticism is in poor shape because the values of entertainment have overtaken it. Now it's mostly a handmaiden to large corporations that make franchise movies. And no one really questions that. Even if [critics] give bad reviews to those films occasionally, they don't question the whole form in any way. Oftentimes when they review certain franchise films poorly, readers get mad at them, and then they have to apologize, as A. O. Scott did when he reviewed—negatively—one of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies. He wrote a retraction later.

It was one of the things, I guess, that got him on the road to writing that book, *Better Living Through Criticism*. That, and being insulted by Samuel L. Jackson on Twitter.

A moment most critics could not survive.

He didn't even try to defend himself. Most critics are shy, retiring people and are not ready to be called out by Samuel Jackson for negatively reviewing a movie that was, in fact, bad.

And Samuel Jackson, you know, he's a talented actor. He's been in a lot of good movies, but he keeps making these terrible films because he likes playing Nick Fury, I guess, and it pays well. I don't understand why he can't take a little criticism from A. O. Scott.

So it's hard for [critics] to subject themselves to that kind of name-calling from a celebrity actor, and they would rather just go along with the system of corporate entertainment than really engage with what's bad about it.

Plus, a lot of people celebrate it. They love it!

Don't critics tend to believe they hold untrammelled opinions, un beholden to the outside forces of, say, corporate entertainment?

I think the new generation of film critics does not think that about themselves. There was a discussion a few months ago on film Twitter about, do I really have to see all these old Kubrick films? You know—how could I have possibly seen these in my life? Kubrick only made 13 movies, and certainly by the time I was their age, I had seen his first 12 films.

My sense is that younger critics are interested in film history, but tend to believe they already know enough about it.
That may be true.

But what I'm wondering is, how do you explain how the structure of film criticism that you point to comes to operate on individual critics?

Oh. Yes. Well that's a very complicated question. I don't really know the answer to that. I don't really hang out with that many film critics. [*Laughs.*] Only one or two, really. But I think people overidentify with the system, regardless of their thoughts about the history of cinema.

But now film criticism—popular, or mainstream film criticism—is bifurcating into people who don't really care about film history that much and just want to talk about new things, and people who are experts in classic cinema, who are really more like buffs. Even if they're talented writers and very

knowledgeable and great, in a lot of ways, their main interest is in classic cinema, not in criticism as a living form that engages in new production and contemporary reality.

Tell me the difference, then, between a buff and a cinephile.

There's a lot of nerd culture involved in film criticism now, and those people are essentially contemporary versions of buffs. Except they don't care about *Casablanca*. Like, *The Matrix* is their *Casablanca*. Cinephiles engage more with the avant garde and classic European art cinema and world cinema.

So is part of the problem with criticism a problem of thinking that your niche is big enough?

Well, film criticism, for most of its practitioners, is not a profession anymore. It's done in one's free time, or is an amateur endeavor. The dwindling number of professional critics are people who work for—not even alt newspapers, alt weeklies, but daily papers. And a lot of those people are not film buffs or cinephiles. They fell into it because they were interested in it, but they don't have the obsessive enthusiasm of either cinephiles or buffs. So it's different now, because there are fewer and fewer people who do it and make a living at it, and more people who do it as a sideline. That's diluted its power.

I don't mean to claim that criticism had power in the sense that it could affect film production, or make or break a film, as it is always claimed that Pauline Kael made *Bonnie and Clyde*. I mean power as a form of expression. Not its power to affect Hollywood production.

But it does have power to make discoveries, and get people to go see films, and understand them and enjoy them and try new things. It used to have a lot of power to do that. And now that is more done by—or was more done by—the Internet and DVD-releasing companies, like Criterion, or various others. But those are becoming . . .

FilmStruck!

FilmStruck was the Criterion Collection plus the Warner Archive, and now that's gone and in the newly energized era of media consolidation, more and more people who wanted to become film critics will just become television recappers. As television and film merge into one medium, and as media content production becomes a more and more dominant form of industrial practice in the US, along with weapons manufacturing, people won't be able to work as critics anymore. They'll be employed by media conglomerates. They'll just be recap-pers of all this new product. So the blockbusters will get more and more attention, and there'll be more and more people writing the same kinds of things about them.

Sometimes criticism slips into it. Because it's the goal of the people who write them to write criticism, not just to describe the plots of episodes of TV shows.

That's when it becomes interesting to me. When, despite the vast constructs that keep folks from—not just criticism per se, or flaw-finding, but from thinking deeply or engaging with media production in any way—when those structures fail, and genuinely thoughtful responses creep in.

Those moments do take place, still. There may be lot of small examples that happen on a daily basis, but they're very micro,

“Making a film featuring the music of Benjamin Britten and a biblical flood so you will get the chance to see a 12-year-old girl dancing in her underwear is the perfect example of going the long way around the barn. And the barn is the perfect color.”

—*Moonrise Kingdom* review, *The Earth Dies Streaming*, page 224

very atomized. It's not like anyone is putting this all together. And they're buried in predictable places that are not worth reading, a lot of the time.

You know, Rotten Tomatoes is really what has had an impact on this. The aggregation of bits of criticism into a number that is assigned to a film is affecting us adversely. They're trying to bring more critics into that now; before it was just glossy magazine and newspaper critics. They're trying to diversify who the critics are now, which is good. But the more people they have the more it reflects this kind of atomized, amateurish meaninglessness.

There are still some great magazines that produce criticism, but there's not the kind of engagement that defined criticism through the late 90s. The crisis of film criticism, to me, really started with the retirement of Pauline Kael who, whether you agree with her or not, was a serious person, a good writer, and the *New Yorker's* inability to find anyone to replace her at her level. And then the retirement of Jonathan Rosenbaum from the *Chicago Reader*, and the firing of J. Hoberman from the *Village Voice*, twenty years later. American film criticism has never recovered from that, in a lot of ways, even though Hoberman still writes a lot of stuff and Rosenbaum still writes occasionally. That generation of baby boomer critics didn't really pull anyone else along after them. Not that they had the power to do that editorially. ➔

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And of course this coincides with media consolidation in the 90s and disenfranchisement of people by not giving them full-time jobs and making them all write for pennies as freelancers, or offering them short-term contracts.

When did you start defining yourself as a film critic?

[Laughs.] When I was a child.

After college I didn't really have any hope to be a writer, because that coincided with the economic downturn of the late 80s and the end of the Reagan era. Plus I was a zine writer and no one would hire anyone of my generation in media at magazines at that time. Especially if you didn't go to an Ivy League school, you couldn't get hired at *The Atlantic* or some place like that. So you had to do it yourself, as you know. And that led to a lot of weird kinds of writing that aren't necessarily standard film criticism as it's practiced by someone like A. O. Scott. Or Jonathan Rosenbaum.

So how did you develop the way that you write about film?

My first regular gig was for the *Utne Reader*, reviewing new releases on video. At that time, I was just trying to conform to the standards of regular criticism as it was practiced then. It wasn't zine writing, so I was trying to be more in line with what the editors wanted, professional. It wasn't that much fun. It was only with the economic collapse in 2007 that I became more free, I think, although I think I wrote some things that are good before then. When I started writing for *n+1* I just didn't care about any of that.

But doesn't that also come from the self-publishing world?

Yes. I'm not going to try to make this appealing to the editors of the *Boston Globe* anymore. I'm going to do whatever I want. A lot of film criticism is sort of grad-studenty and semi-academic. Nor was I interested in that. So I just decided to do it however I wanted. And having written for zines, it was easier for me to do that.

And I was writing for *n+1*, a politics and culture magazine that didn't have that high a circulation, and just let me do whatever I wanted. Because they knew me from zines, they didn't know me from writing for the *Boston Globe*. It was a very good situation, even though they didn't pay very much and I had a full-time job also.

You describe yourself, in the intro to the book, examining the field of criticism and identifying three or four elements that you weren't interested in carrying over. That you just didn't want to do.

Yes. I'd been thinking about that for a long time before I ever did that. Those are things that always annoyed me, throughout my life, reading regular film criticism, but I realized I could just get rid of them. No editor was going to ask me to put them in, or even notice their absence. Or care.

So what was the first thing to go?

The first thing to go was plot description. I mean, I still do these things occasionally. It's not like I'm some purist. I will put these things in if I feel the need to do it. But the first one was plot description. I hate reading plot description in film reviews and there's a lot of that, especially in newspapers.

The second was mentioning the resumes of principals



involved in films. Whether they're actors, directors, writers, cinematographers. And then the third was . . .

Box office?

Oh, that's the worst. I hate bringing up box office numbers, anyone who does that is just contemptible. If you start talking about how much money other films by these people made, or what you expect this one to make, or if you think it's going to get nominated for an Oscar, that's really the lowest. I can't believe people do that, or that that's even allowed to be done.

But another thing that bothered me about film criticism in newspapers and magazines was that everything was always the same length. And you always knew what was going to be written about that week. There was this idea that certain films had to be written about and they were the big films, and that was totally based on what studios were putting out. That excuse was popular, so there was this vicious circle of stupidity and meaninglessness that has to be broken.

And I also try to write so my work can't really be excerpted for publicity purposes on movie posters and in other kinds of promotion. I dislike gushing quotes from the same writers over and over again. I just don't want to be part of that.

What abandoning those elements results in, in your work, is this intimate way of talking about film that centers on an experience that you had as a human and that you want to share with the reader, also a human.

I do want it to relate more to life, and to my life, because critics that I liked when I was younger did that. I also liked critics that are very free in their approach to the world around them, not necessarily about their own life. Like Kael is always talking about other things besides films, and Manny Farber was very unconstrained and not beholden to what the studios wanted or expected from critics. So that was important to me.

But that annoys people. When I was writing for zines a long time ago, a friend of mine wrote a piece that I loved, but he made fun of these televisions hosts who talked about films, because they talked about extraneous things in their own lives too much. And he said, maybe eventually they'll just start talking about their bus ride to the movie theater. That was

funny in that context, but that actually made me think that I would prefer to hear about their bus ride than what they thought about some terrible film.

Last night I read your review of *Moonrise Kingdom* to a friend.

That was a two-sentence review.

But it's concisely conveys the mood of the film.

Yeah.

It doesn't actually say, I didn't enjoy this film very much. Yet one surmises that you didn't believe it merited a long, thoughtful, drawn-out essay.

Right.

But it's still really smart, thoughtful and engaged criticism. In two sentences.

A lot of things people write about are not worth as much ink as they get. Or pixels, or whatever. Also, a lot of film critics are trying to be definitive all the time. They're not acting like they're on the front lines, like they just have to say something so that there's a record that people saw this and reacted to it as it happened. It's not historical yet. Manny Farber's writings on *The Third Man* date from when that film came out, so they're not like anything anyone else [has] written about that film since, which is that it's a classic that's unassailable by subsequent generations. So what he says about it is so different than what anyone else says about it now. When I read that as a young person, it really struck me.

This seems like a minor thing, but I get the sense that the way that you feel beholden to a sense of history is really unique. Like, at your book signing last night—we were going to get drinks afterwards anyway, so I was just doing the formal thing of having you sign your first book by standing in the formal signing line at the official book release event. And you signed my book, “Thanks for coming, see you in a minute.”

Oh, I did do that. I just feel like there are things that have already been written that are good, that you have to live up to. I'm not trying to be, like, an indie band that's influenced by all these bands from the past and refers to them constantly. That's annoying.

But you're also not trying to be the indie band that's like, we don't need to refer to anyone because we're beyond that. You're not trying to rise above history, or exempt yourself from accountability.

It's because as you get older, your desire to be right diminishes. When I was in my 20s I always wanted to be right about what I thought about certain films, or film directors, or actors. Now I don't care. It doesn't matter to me if I'm right. I mean, I think I'm right, of course, and I can defend my judgments. Which I think is important for critics to do. Instead of writing letters of apology to the reader for not liking a *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie.

My main concern is not being right or wrong. It's creating a valid description of the film that makes sense for contemporary readers in an unexpected way.



Chef David Campigotto serves his steaming cassoulet from glazed ceramic terrines, or cassoules. **PHOTO** MELISSA BLACKMON

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Chef David Campigotto spills the beans on Castelnau-dary Cassoulet

Each year the French chef takes up residency at Publican Quality Meats and shows *les Américains* how it's done at home.

By **MIKE SULA**

David Campigotto seemed unnerved that I was taking my cassoulet to go. “If you cover the beans while they’re hot it can make them pass out,” he told me, insisting I leave the lids ajar on the two 32-ounce plastic deli cups he had carefully packed with sausage, pork rib and duck leg confit, creamy white *haricots lingots*, and a heart-stopping amount of fat.

He’d shipped five 10-kilo sacks of those beans to Publican Quality Meats from his hometown of Castelnau-dary in southern France, where they’d been harvested and dried in August. He wasn’t going to let them ‘pass out’—his Franglicism for breaking down and turning to mush—under my questionable protection.

Earlier in the week I’d told him that last winter I made a version of his cassoulet recipe—published in Paul Kahan’s *Cheers to the Publican*—along with some tweaks inspired by Paula Wolfert’s famous recipe for Toulouse-style cassoulet from *The Cooking of Southwest France*.

Campigotto stared at me blankly for a moment.

“You can make a cassoulet out of whatever you want,” he said. “That’s not gonna be a Castelnau-dary cassoulet.” I did in fact mash up the two recipes, but I was really just trying to bait the chef. I received a similar pregnant pause a few weeks earlier when I told Kahan the same thing.

But Kahan didn’t always know better either. In his cookbook he tells the story of the first time he met Campigotto four years earlier and he brought up breadcrumbs and tomato, two ingredients commonly found in a Toulouse cassoulet that wouldn’t be caught dead in one made in Castelnau-dary. As Kahan told the guests assembled at PQM for Campigotto’s fifth annual cassoulet throwdown last Thursday, using breadcrumbs and tomato is like “sticking a knife in Chef David’s heart.” ➔



Chef David Campigotto (left) and Paul Kahan (right) at Publican Quality Meats. MELISSA BLACKMON



Guests enjoy Chef David Campigotto's cassoulet at the fifth annual cassoulet throwdown, held in Publican Quality Meats' kitchen. MELISSA BLACKMON

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Castelnaudary is often described as the buckle on France's cassoulet belt, which terminates 43 kilometers to the south at Carcassonne, and begins 60 to the north in Toulouse. Campigotto, 44, was actually born in Toulouse but moved to Castelnaudary at the age of three when his chef-father took over a restaurant in the little town and inherited its cassoulet recipe. The son grew up waiting tables, but "I wasn't welcome in the kitchen," he says. "When we finished the service, all the beans left in the terrines the customers didn't have—we put them in one dish and we put them back in the oven and by the time we finished the

service we used to eat this cassoulet. That's the best cassoulet. That's the cassoulet I want my customers to have."

Proper cassoulet, no matter where it's from, is the very emblem of slow food, requiring a long bake in a low oven before a period of rest—preferably overnight—and then another slow reheating, so that the beans are creamy but intact, the meat tender as butter, and the crust that forms on top a bewitching crunchy, caramelized lid on the immoderate richness below.

He learned this after striking out on his own at 23 with a small place outside of town, and hiring a fiftysomething chef with a drinking problem. "He was doing a crap job. We had a



Chef David Campigotto prepares his legendary Castelnaudary Cassoulet. MELISSA BLACKMON

fireplace. He was burning the meat, so I said I don't want to employ any more chefs. I want to make it."

Campigotto's father eventually taught him the recipe, and he reopened his restaurant in town in 2012, a 30-seat spot that can put out 30 terrines per day in the summer high season, and is gradually achieving a reputation as a destination for cassoulet tourists. That's how Delilah's owner Mike Miller found him six months later. Miller, on a quest to find the world's best cassoulet, came in one day. The Gun Club, Violet Femmes, and Ministry were on sound systems, and the beans blew him away. When the chef emerged from the kitchen a bond was quickly formed. "I said I can make in Chicago if you find me a place." That April the chef arrived, and Miller began leaving persistent messages on Kahan's voicemail.

Kahan tells the story of their first meeting in his book, and last week he told it to the guests at the first of five dinners held at PQM and Publican Anker. The chefs agreed to do a series of dinners that first year, but Campigotto insisted on using Castelnaudary beans as well as the glazed ceramic terrines, or *cassoules*, manufactured in neighboring Mas-Saintes-Puelles in a factory along the Canal du Midi. Kahan would

source the ducks from foie gras producer Au Bon Canard in Minnesota and use the same fine local pigs he gets for his restaurants. "The pigs are fatter in America," says Campigotto.

The dinners have been so successful among a hardcore group of One Off Hospitality regulars, and habitués of Delilah's (where Campigotto tends to hang out when he's in town), they've repeated every year since with the latest harvest of beans, shipped to Fulton Market. A set of terrines spends the year locked up in a cabinet in Kahan's office, and when Campigotto gets to town they come out of storage. First he soaks the beans while making the pork jelly they're cooked in, bringing pig trotters to a furious boil to extract their collagen. After two to three hours in the water, the beans are brought to a boil, then drained and placed in the stock with garlic and brought to boil again.

Then Campigotto begins to build the cassoulet, rubbing the interior of a cassoulet furiously with garlic. He ladles some beans in, sprinkles them with crushed black pepper, grates nutmeg on top and on the sides of the bowls, and layers the beans with pieces of pig skin and shredded trotter meat. He props alternating pork ribs and sausages on the sides of the bowl, ten apiece, then layers spilt-duck-leg thigh pieces in the middle. The terrines are filled to the brim with more beans and topped with fistfuls of duck fat.

They go in a low oven for six hours. Every half hour Campigotto breaks the crust that begins to form on top with a wooden paddle, each time ladling more stock into the fissure. Cassoulet is always better the next day, he says, but he only has time to give them a two-hour rest before rewarming them for another two hours.

The dinners are great theater, with Miller telling the story of Castelnaudary cassoulet and how it came to Chicago, while Campigotto serves guests tableside, making sure each gets a rib, a sausage, and a piece of duck, along with the fat-saturated beans and pieces of the precious crunchy crust. There are no breadcrumbs—that's a cheap shortcut to achieving a proper crust, according to Campigotto. And there's no tomato—the acidity would cause the beans to pass out. But the depth of flavor and texture and the power of the extraordinary richness that slowly develops over days of work have the effect of a Quaalude, in Kahan's description. "You don't eat it and go 'this is rich,'" he says. "Your body tells you how rich it is. And you don't need a lot of it. When you eat something that good it completely changes your mood."

@MikeSula

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Rightlynd
LIZ LAUREN

THEATER

You can't fight city hall

Ike Holter's Chicago Cycle rolls on with *Rightlynd*.

By CATEY SULLIVAN

Unlike, say, the Chicago of *Chicago*, Ike Holter's Chicago is vividly recognizable. The specifics that define the arc of his Chicago Cycle are as familiar as that unpatched pothole that taunts you daily or the creep of gentrification through Pilsen. Throughout the cycle, Holter has examined various aspects of the city, ranging from neighborhood crime to the Kafka-esque bureaucracy of the Chicago Public Schools to everyday superheroes.

In *Rightlynd*, which chronologically comes at the beginning of the seven-play cycle, he ventures into politics. It features Nina Esposito, first-term alderwoman of the eponymous (and fictional) 51st Ward. Directed by Lisa Portes, this Victory Gardens production opens

with a fusillade of words and unfolds in a crossfire of genres.

Into 100 minutes, Holter packs song-and-dance numbers, brawls worthy of a light saber, a star-crossed love story, and pointed commentaries on voter suppression, gentrification, and political corruption. The dialogue veers from kitchen-sink realism to heightened verse. The opening gambit is a lightning burst of poetry that evokes Nelson Algren and nails the complicated, conflicting, totally messed up and almost indescribable beauty of Chicago.

The plot is a warhorse: an idealistic political novice runs for office only to find that compromise and corruption are pretty much unavoidable. Doing good, Alderwoman Esposito (Monica Orozco) learns, is harder than

promising to do good. Calling to burn down the system is easy. Coming up with specific solutions to build something better? That's all-too-often unaddressed in the fervor of reform campaigns of all stripes.

Esposito is motivated to run when she sees the longtime residents and businesses in her neighborhood being forced out by gentrification. The Big Bad in the drama is the suit from the Applewood development corporation (Jerome Beck). We all know this guy. He uses words like "revitalization" when he buys up schools that shouldn't have been shuttered in the first place in order to turn them into multimillion dollar condos. He forces out family-owned auto-body shops and brings in artisanal beard-oil boutiques.

Esposito runs on a promise to stop Applewood and save the neighborhood. But her campaign has barely begun before she starts making choices that are unbelievably stupid, even for a newbie, especially for a character that's been presented as whip smart. She makes friends with the local weed dealer (LaKecia Harris). Then she starts buying pot in exchange for votes. On the one hand, so what? Surely we all know by now that weed should be as legal as brunch, if not more so. On the other hand: Blatantly buying votes? That's got nothing to do with the legality of marijuana. Esposito's blithe bone-headedness doesn't square with the intelligence she displays otherwise. Her downfall seems obvious early, her decisions to flout the law seem unlikely. That is the primary problem with *Rightlynd*.

The secondary problem is that Portes's cast seemed under-rehearsed on opening night: there were more than a few odd repetitions and pauses just awkward enough to seem unplanned. But these are minimal, likely temporary troubles. The cast is all in, and the energy ricochets through the theater. And make no mistake: there is a bounty of entertainment in watching Esposito's story play out.

As Esposito, Orozco has the headstrong, ambitious grit you'd expect from anyone willing to take on a long-sitting incumbent. Her belief that she can make right prevail never falters, even as she gets deeper and deeper into legal quicksand. In her final incarnation—when righteousness is nowhere to be found—she remains adamant that she's a force for good. Whether it's denial or a front doesn't matter. It's how she presents, and presentation for a politician is everything.

The supporting cast ably portrays the assortment of believable characters in her orbit: troubled constituents, a conflicted assistant, and the love interest, an ex-con whose troubles at the ballot box are an urgent depiction of a systemic problem. Holter's authenticity only flags in his depiction of a reporter whose cheesy, blatantly subjective copy wouldn't make it past a decent editor.

Flaws and all, *Rightlynd* is a wild ride from an important voice. The fires it takes on—gentrification and the wholesale erasure of entire communities—should have everybody up in arms. And, with real-life aldermanic and mayoral elections coming up in February, audiences will want to make sure they're registered to vote. **R**

@CateySullivan



Mansfield Park ■ MICHAEL BROSILOW

THEATER

Old school

Eclipse Theatre rescues *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* from being just another curio.

The last production in the Eclipse Theatre Company's season dedicated to William Inge is a perfectly crafted, mildly melodramatic 1957 drama about a domineering, unfaithful traveling salesman, his stalwart, long suffering wife, and their two unhappy children. In the hands of a less capable director and cast, this once-popular play could come off as just another museum piece, interesting only to theater history aficionados. To be sure, its three acts unfold slowly. Inge carefully adds in one conflict after another—the husband feels trapped in the house, the wife wants him to do less traveling for work, the daughter resists her mother's attempts to get her to socialize more—and slowly, slowly, slowly the tension mounts.

Happily, director Jerrell L. Henderson has filled his production with strong actors who know how to give Inge's words life and hold the audience's full attention. Aneisa Hicks, playing Cora Flood, the wife at the center of the story, shows remarkable range and depth; she is equally compelling when she is quietly following her daily routine and when she speaks her mind. Chris Daley, as Cora's husband, Ruben, matches Hicks's energy and power; when they clash, they fight like a real couple, with a real, palpable passion for each other. The play, set in Oklahoma in 1922, touches on a number of social issues—racism, anti-Semitism, class difference, economic disruption (Ruben sells harnesses at a time when automobiles are replacing horses)—and Henderson and his cast deftly deal with these issues, acknowledging them, but never allowing them to upstage Inge's story and his perhaps too painstaking character development. —**JACK HELBIG** *THE DARK AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS* Through 12/16: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2 PM; no performance Thu 11/22, Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport, 773-935-6875, eclipse-theatre.com, \$35, \$25 students and seniors.

Hit parade

Il Trovatore's plot is grim, but who cares when you know the score?

The mob of horrified faces on the curtain (by set designer Charles Edwards) that rises on Lyric Opera's produc-

tion of Giuseppe Verdi's *Il Trovatore* sets the mood for the story to come. It's grim—a tale of such flamboyant vengeance, it became grist for Marx Brothers mayhem in *A Night at the Opera*.

Its most memorable character—and the one it ought to be named for—is Azucena, a conflicted gypsy compelled to avenge her mother's fiery scapegoat death at the stake. She botched a revenge infanticide years earlier, by throwing the wrong kid into the fire, but eventually succeeds, bringing the opera to its spectacularly abrupt and diabolical conclusion. The switched babies plot includes a standard love triangle, pitting a pure young maiden and her (wink-wink) gypsy lover against a villainous aristocrat. As written, it all transpires in 15th century Spain.

Unfortunately, this otherwise traditional production, originally directed by Sir David McVicar and last seen at Lyric four years ago, moves the action up to the 19th century, losing the height-of-the-Inquisition context, when burning at the stake was a common public ritual. But Verdi's greatest-hits score (including the familiar and famously bare-chested "Anvil Chorus")—which has been enough to keep this warhorse on the stages of major opera companies ever since its debut in 1853—prevails. Among the mostly young cast successfully navigating demanding vocal roles, tenor Russell Thomas as the gypsy's supposed son, Manrico, is a standout. Soprano Tamara Wilson is the ingenue Leonora; mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton is Azucena. Bass Roberto Tagliavini, as a soldier whose storytelling launches it all, makes an impressive Lyric debut. —**DEANNA ISAACS** *IL TROVATORE* Wed 11/21 and Sun 11/25, 2 PM; Fri 11/30, Mon 12/3, and Thu 12/6, 7 PM; Sun 12/9, 2 PM, Lyric Opera House, 20 N. Wacker, 312-827-5600, lyricopera.org, \$39-\$279.

RR No poor relation
Northlight Theatre finds the radicalism in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*.

Kate Hamill describes her version of Jane Austen's 1814 novel about poor but amiable Fanny Price and her coming of age among her wealthy relatives at the well-appointed Mansfield Park as more than an adaptation. She calls it a "collaboration between myself and the author." This is not mere Austenophilia. Hamill (who also plays three roles in the production) keeps Austen's characters, and her basic plot, more or less intact—Fanny remains steadfast and true, despite all distractions and tempta-

tions to do otherwise. But Hamill heightens the drama. Fanny's aunt Lady Bertram, for instance, is revealed to be an opium addict, and the story's sexual undercurrents are much more obvious onstage than in the book. As is the most controversial element of the novel, the fact that the magnificent Mansfield Park was paid for with profits from the slave trade in the Caribbean.

There is a passing reference to this in Austen's novel, but Hamill makes it a major focus of her adaptation. At one point Fanny's beloved cousin Edmund shows his moral superiority by lamenting loudly that "we are all beneficiaries of that system [slavery]." Hamill's changes may shock purists, but they provide a welcome respite for those of us who get a little irritated by the bubble of privilege Austen's characters frolic in.

Stuart Carden's energetic production unfolds gracefully, thanks in no small part to his excellent cast. Kayla Carter's performance as Fanny balances well her character's charm and amiability with the need to provide a sound moral center to the story. Carter's Fanny, like all Austen heroines, is no pushover. Likewise, Heidi Kettenring provides fire and steely backbone as Mrs. Norris, Fanny's martinet of an aunt. All of this plays out on Yu Shibagaki's simple, elegant, infinitely practical set. —**JACK HELBIG** *MANSFIELD PARK* Through 12/16: Wed 1 and 7:30 PM, Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 2:30 and 8 PM, Sun 2:30 PM; also Sun 11/25, 7:30 PM; no performances Thu 11/22 or Wed 12/5, 1 PM, Northlight Theatre, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie, 847-673-6300, northlight.org, \$31-\$79.

ARTS & CULTURE

All this and a helicopter too?!

Miss Saigon is back, bombast, orientalist clichés, and all.

Miss Saigon, the 1989 musical by Claude-Michel Schönberg, Richard Maltby Jr., and Alain Boublil that did for helicopters what *Phantom of the Opera* did for chandeliers, is back, self-conscious bombast and orientalist clichés fully intact.

Though revamped for the 2017 Broadway revival, everything about Laurence Connor's staging feels old-school, in a bad way. True, when you're starting with *Madama Butterfly* as your narrative inspiration, melodramatic stereotypes of Asian women dying for love are perhaps unavoidable. At least this production avoids the "yellowface" controversy that plagued the original, when Jonathan Pryce—eyelid prosthetics and all—was cast as the Eurasian pimp known as the Engineer. (Red Concepción plays the role here, and he is magnetic in his moral turpitude.)

The Vietnamese characters function mostly as one-dimensional background. From the whores in the Engineer's Saigon brothel, where American soldier Chris (Anthony Festa) meets virginal country girl Kim (Emily Bautista) right before the city falls, to the Viet Cong celebrating its capture, they're tabula rasa for the Americans' libidos, guilt, and fear. Even the actual images of "bui doi"—the interracial children of GIs, like Kim's son Tam (Ryder Khatiwala), that we see at the top of the second act—feel like they're there to serve the

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ARTS & CULTURE

➡ American-savior storyline.

If you like the music and the story, it's perfectly serviceable—and the chopper is cool. But as Qui Nguyen's *Vietgone* at Writers Theatre showed earlier this year, the actual stories of Vietnamese people are far more complex and compelling than all of *Miss Saigon*'s showy vocal and visual histrionics can reveal. —**KERRY REID** *MISS SAIGON* Through 12/8: Wed 2 and 7:30 PM, Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM; also Fri 11/23, 2 PM; no performance Thu 11/22, Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W. Randolph, 800-775-2000, broadwayinchicago.com, \$35-\$120.

Watching the detectives

Plainclothes takes a look behind the security cameras at a department store.

The loss prevention office at Brady's, a Michigan Avenue department store that looks and sounds a lot like Macy's, has been catching and prosecuting a lot of BMJs (black male youths) lately, and the corporate headquarters is starting to catch wind of what looks like a definite pattern. The staff, comprised mostly of people of color, is incredulous, but after a confrontation with a shoplifter becomes violent, the group of coworkers must examine their own practices, which inevitably leads to larger questions about the corporate and socioeconomic hierarchy of who gets to watch whom.

In this devised work, playwright Spenser Davis draws on his own experiences working as a security officer at a similar store, both undercover and behind the security camera, and as the director of the Chicago run of *At the Table*, which was created by playwright Michael Perlman in collaboration with the actors. Here, with Davis co-directing his own work with Kanomé Jones, there's a lot that resonates. A large ensemble of familiar Broken Nose Theatre faces, plus some new ones, create a convincing begrudging retail work-family, up to and including a young kleptomaniac whose reputation for mopping is so well-known up and down Michigan Avenue that he has a codename: "bootyshorts."

But there's no getting around the fact that the central incident and subsequent corporate drama that all of the timely questions about racial profiling and quotas and law enforcement's handling of petty offenses hinges on just doesn't ring true. Even though it doesn't quite reach the level of profundity it strives toward, *Plainclothes* functions as a smart, observant hangout work comedy. —**DAN JAKES** *PLAINCLOTHES* Through 12/15: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; no performance Thu 11/22, Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee, 773-697-3830, brokennotheatre.com, pay what you can.

RR A true gift

The Steadfast Tin Soldier brings us hope, gratitude, and magic.

Many of the memorable experiences created by Lookingglass over the years have been triumphs of imaginative and physical scale—more often than not, the augmented kind—like Amanda Dehnert's *Eastland* or Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses*. This enchanting world-premiere Christmas pantomime is a decidedly different sort, one that resembles a music box: fastidious and deceptively compact and, despite its weight and elegance, ultimately a machine masterfully crafted for play and wonder.

Four powdered wig-clad chamber musicians provide string, piano, and woodwind accompaniment to Hans

Christian Andersen's fable about a one-legged tin soldier (Alex Stein) hopelessly in love with a toy ballerina (Kasey Foster). Through dances choreographed by Tracy Walsh and a wide variety of truly spectacular puppets designed by Chicago Puppet Studios, Zimmerman's ensemble of five creatively play out the toys' misadventures at the dinner table, out the window, and in the weeds of a dangerous, indifferent world. The characters grow and shrink with their emotional circumstances. We see a preverbal child, for instance, represented by massive, cloud-like hands and a head while he's engaged in play, then diminish to an insignificant, melancholy wooden doll after being teased by a bratty sibling.

Famously, Andersen's stories don't shy away from the cruelty in humanity, and that gives the sacrifice and love and beauty they mine out of it and showcase more meaning. Zimmerman's adaptation is full of so many brain-tickling visual and emotional contradictions and bits of pure magic that I'm not ashamed to say that I was a blubbing mess by the end of it, my heart full of hope and gratitude. What an absolute gift this *Tin Soldier* is. —**DAN JAKES** *THE STEADFAST TIN SOLDIER* Through 1/13/19: Wed 7:30 PM, Thu 2 and 7:30 PM, Fri 7:30 PM, Sat-Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Tue 7:30 PM; no performances 11/22 or 12/25, Lookingglass Theatre Company, 821 N. Michigan, 312-337-0665, lookingglasstheatre.org, \$60-\$85.

Some achieve greatness

Writers' Twelfth Night doesn't quite fall into that category, but it's still good fizzy fun.

Fortunately for Writers Theatre, the highly implausible claim on its website that *Twelfth Night* "has never felt more relevant" isn't the funniest thing about the production. However, what it lacks in relevance, it makes up for in actual humor, with a blend of broad slapstick and dry wit.

Scott Parkinson steals the entire show as the hilariously affected Sir Andrew Aguecheek, often commanding full belly laughs. He flounces and flops around the stage, playing the audience like a fiddle. However, Jennifer Latimore (Viola) and Andrea San Miguel (Olivia) are no slouches, providing the show with some gravitas and displaying impressive range as both comedic and dramatic actors. Their interplay is compelling, blowing the dust off of and new life into Shakespeare's words.

Mara Blumenfeld's costumes indulge in a raucous visual cacophony of a floral extravaganza. It is excessive and it works splendidly. The original music by Josh Schmidt is lovely and organically woven into the proceedings.

The first half of the play is extraordinary; a scene where Malvolio (a delightful Sean Fortunato) receives a letter supposedly from his beloved is exquisitely staged and wrung for every possible laugh. The second half feels considerably less thoughtfully staged and phoned-in by comparison. Master writer though the Bard may have been, no comedy ever written has fully justified a run time of 2 hours and 25 minutes, and the second half dutifully rambles on to the obligatory conclusion amidst more than a few yawns. Overall, though, the production is light, fizzy fun, showcasing an across-the-board cast of solid actors. —**SHERI FLANDERS** *TWELFTH NIGHT, OR WHAT YOU WILL* Through 12/16: Wed 3 and 7:30 PM, Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2 and 6 PM, Tue 7:30 PM; no performances Thu 11/22 or Wed 12/5, 3 PM; Writers Theatre, 325 Tudor Ct., Glencoe, 847-242-6000, writerstheatre.org, \$50-\$80. ☐

VISUAL ART

'Some black secrets revealed'

"African-American Designers in Chicago" is an important corrective to art history.

By DANIELLE A. SCRUGGS



African-American Designers in Chicago: Art, Commerce and the Politics of Race" at the Chicago Cultural Center is a show that serves as a much-needed corrective to design history: it covers a century's worth of fine art, commercial, and industrial design by black creators

in Chicago, some of whom first came here during the Great Migration.

Most importantly, it's a pure visual delight, offering a wide selection of breathtaking art from the early 20th century to the 1980s: sketches, paintings, blueprints, book jackets, album covers, beauty-product packaging, a diorama that depicts the death of

**blackball,
black book,
black boy,
black eye,
black friday,
black hand,
black heart
blackjack,
black magic,
blackmail,
black market,
black maria,
black mark,
little black sambo.**

white lies.

Black is Beautiful.

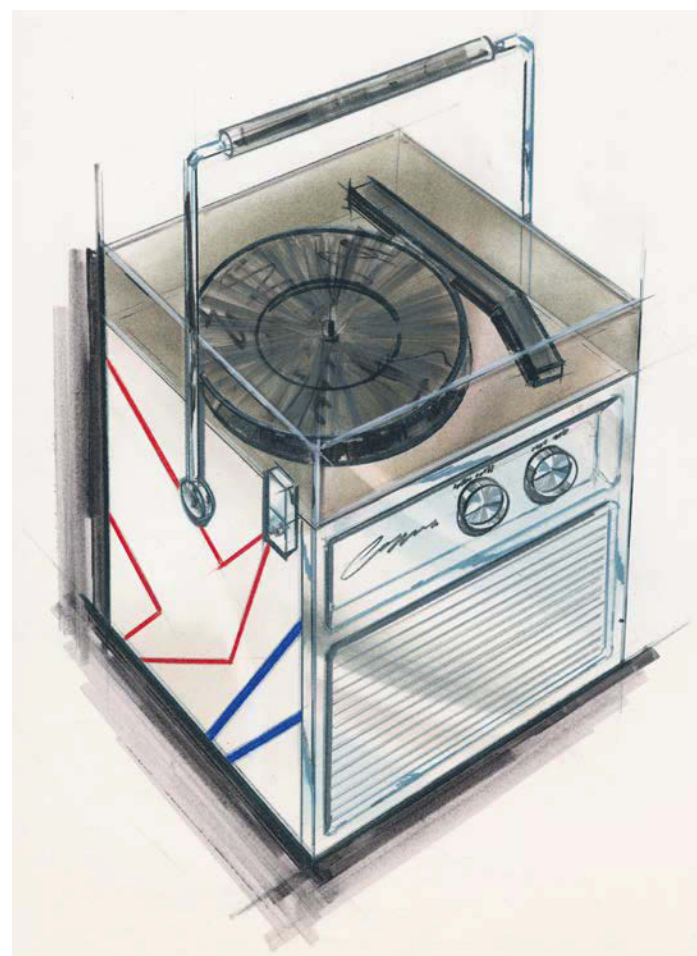
Vince Cullers Advertising, Inc.
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Crispus Attucks, World War II-era posters for war bonds, ads that also function as text-only conceptual art, and vintage *Ebony*, *Jet*, and *Negro Digest* magazines.

The show, located in a stately room with high ceilings and parquet wood floors on the Cultural Center's fourth floor, was curated by Daniel Schulman, Chris Dingwall, and Tim Samuelson. The various pieces hang on two of the walls or are displayed in a series of wood cases divided into four distinct time periods: Futures (1900-1920), Renaissance (1920-1945), Abundance (1945-1963), and Revolutions (1963-1980s).

Among the standouts in the exhibit are the designs of Charles Harrison and Thomas

Miller. Harrison (whom I first learned of at the 2017 Derrick Adams show "Future People" at Stony Island Arts Bank), worked as a designer for Sears Roebuck until he retired in 1993. There's a shelf that displays some of the objects he designed, including a coffeepot, a toaster, a sewing machine, and his 1958 re-design of the ViewMaster, and then, directly below, his sketches for those products, which reveal a fastidious nature and an eye for fine art. While functional in nature, the sketches also work well as stand-alone art—there is a certain kind of vibrancy to them. Some, like the drawing of the sewing machine, are white pencil on black paper, and show a strong understanding of the mechanics of the product.



7-Up Bottles by Thomas Miller, ca. 1972.; "Black is Beautiful," for Vince Cullers Advertising, by Emmett McBain 1968.; *Design for a portable phonograph* by Charles Harrison, 1972

© JAMES PRINZ
PHOTOGRAPHY; EMMETT
MCBAIN DESIGN PAPERS,
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
AND UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES,
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO; CHARLES
HARRISON PAPERS, SPECIAL
COLLECTIONS AND
UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES,
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CHICAGO

But at the same time, his understanding of light and shadow give the sketches an extra flair that pushes beyond simple renderings: the drawings practically leap off the page.

Another cabinet nearby contains the work of Miller, a designer from Virginia who settled in Chicago after World War II. He worked at Morton Goldsholl Associates specializing in logo design from 1955 till his retirement in 1988. He was best known for the 1974 iteration of the 7Up logo with its hundreds of white and green dots, similar to a theater marquee display and also reminiscent of dot matrix printing and early video game graphics.

The work of Pedro Bell, a self-taught artist who designed album covers for Funkadelic, and Sylvia Abernathy, who did the same for Sun Ra and Archie Shepp, share a single display case. Abernathy also designed *In Our Terribleness*, a poetry book collaboration with Amiri Baraka that featured original black and white photography and a page made of a reflective material so anyone looking into the book would literally see themselves. I would

have loved to have seen more space dedicated to Abernathy's work, even an entire case like for Harrison and Miller. Her work feels bold, elegant, and conceptually rigorous in a way that Bell's does not.

Another case shows the work of Leroy Winbush, whose life story would make for an excellent prestige drama series on your streaming service of choice. Winbush, who was born in Detroit and moved to Chicago as a teenager, started out as a sign painter. He would go on to become the first black art director at Goldblatt's Department Store, the first art director of Johnson Publishing Company, and director of the South Side Community Art Center. He also created window displays for white-owned banks and department stores in the Loop and art directed several cheeky, playful, colorful photo shoots for *Duke*, a short-lived men's lifestyle magazine reminiscent of *Esquire* and *GQ* that was created by former employees of Johnson Publishing Company. Every cover of *Duke* featured the magazine's mascot, a wooden, ➔

continued from 21

button-eyed mannequin. One shows Duke Ellington playing piano with the mannequin. Another cover has the provocative headline: “Negroes don’t know anything about jazz.” Both reveal Winbush’s sense of humor and flair for maximalism: his whole ethos appears to be “more is more.”

My favorite part of the exhibit, though, is a trio of text-only ads created by Emmett McBain in 1968 to promote the Vince Cullers advertising agency. The first ad features a black silhouette with the phrase SOME BLACK SECRETS REVEALED where the mouth would be. It reminded me of the Kerry James Marshall painting *Portrait of the Artist as a Shadow of his Former Self*, where the only features visible are eyes and a mouth. Another ad, titled “Black Is Beautiful,” is a list in Helvetica font of words and phrases that all start with “black” that all have negative connotations and ends with the phrase “white lies.” The third, called “What color is black?,” contains no images. Instead, it uses a poem by Barbara D. Mahone that celebrates the diversity of black people to show the principles the Cullers agency stands for in a way that doesn’t feel cheap or unearned:

Our love of self,
of others
brothers, sisters
people of a thousand shades of Black
all one. . .

All three ads are simple, powerful, and effective because they use advertising language to debunk some of the stereotypes about black lives that were created by advertising. They also demonstrate how black people have always had a way of using materials meant to harm us or demean us and turn them on their heads to empower us instead.

The world of design is often portrayed as being very white and very male. And yet the designs and principles of the artists on display here, created by black people, have persisted through 60-plus years. I have a desk chair, for example, that strongly resembles the blue midcentury modern chair on display that was designed by Charles Harrison. The principles of the Black Arts Movement—boldness, humor, and an unapologetic love and celebration of blackness—are still persistent in contemporary art. It’s edifying to see in this exhibition how much innovation and everyday design that we still live with came from black people in Chicago. 

MOVIES

Modern history

Dovlatov and *Outlaw King* take pains to present the past as their audiences would prefer to see it.

By BEN SACHS

In the past month, Netflix has premiered two visually impressive historical dramas by noted directors. Aleksei German Jr.’s *Dovlatov*, a nontraditional biopic of Russian novelist Sergei Dovlatov, became available to stream at the end of October, while David Mackenzie’s *Outlaw King*, about the Scots’ armed rebellion against English occupation in the early 14th century, was made available on the site two weeks ago. Neither film is American, yet both feel like Hollywood productions in their slick stylization and blatant anachronisms. In fact one might say that *Dovlatov* and *Outlaw King* go down as easily as they do because they advance a recognizably contemporary perspective on the past. One watches these films comfortably on the “right” side of history—it’s clear who you’re supposed to root for and jeer against, and the filmmakers make efforts to honor 21st-century concepts of anti-imperialism and women’s rights. I can’t speak to the historical accuracy of either, although their predominance at the time seems suspect.

I prefer *Dovlatov* to *Outlaw King* for a few reasons: it introduced me to a subject with which I was unfamiliar, and I found it the more inventive work in form and structure. As opposed to most artist biopics, which attempt to summarize subjects’ entire careers, *Dovlatov* takes the novel approach of dramatizing just six days in the protagonist’s life. And where traditional biopics devote at least some time to the subjects’ creative achievements, *Dovlatov* is concerned exclusively with the hero’s failures. Sergei Dovlatov (who



Dovlatov; Outlaw King

died in 1990 at the age of 48) was a novelist who was unable to publish his books in the Soviet Union and became respected in his home country only after his death. German’s film looks in on the writer in early November 1971 when Dovlatov (played by Milan Maric in a winningly wry performance) is at the height of his frustration. Estranged from his wife and daughter and working as a reporter for a factory newspaper (the only writing job he can get), he finds solace in killing time with other suppressed writers and artists. German, directing a script he wrote with Yulia Tupikina, crafts a ingratiatingly warm

portrait of this stifled community, developing an ironic sense of moral triumph amidst professional defeat.

It probably isn’t a coincidence that the film takes place in the same year that German’s father (one of the all-time great Russian directors) completed his feature *Trial on the Road*, only for Soviet authorities to suppress it for 15 years. Indeed *Dovlatov* often plays like a tribute to German Sr. in its graceful, mysterious camera movements and its bursts of odd humor. In one subplot, Dovlatov pretends to be a police inspector and plays a prank on a pathetic informant who’s been ratting out

ARTS & CULTURE

the intellectuals of Leningrad for trying to procure contraband copies of Nabokov's *Lolita*. In another, the writer becomes obsessed with a dream of talking about piña coladas with Leonid Brezhnev. The film is unlike the works of German's father in that it occasionally stoops to sentimentality. The director includes a needless motif in which the broke writer asks his friends for money so he can buy his daughter a doll, and the film climaxes with Dovlatov proudly telling off a pompous arts committeeman. Still, I was so absorbed in German's richly detailed (and largely idealized) vision of the Soviet past that I could overlook his lapses in good sense.

Outlaw King might be summarized as one big lapse in good sense for David Mackenzie (*Asylum*, *Spread*, *Starred Up*), otherwise one of the finest English-language directors to emerge in the past two decades. Viewers who have followed his unpredictable (and always perceptive) career will be shocked by how conventional this film is in its storytelling—the script, credited to five writers, follows a familiar war movie template, with the aggrieved Scottish king Robert Bruce (Chris Pine, returning to his usual bland self after delivering such nuanced work in Mackenzie's *Hell or High Water*) suffering indignity at the hands of English imperials, rounding up fighters, and engaging the occupying army in combat. Almost none of the characters are particularly developed (the English villains are laughably one-note), and, most damningly, the movie rarely delivers compelling depictions of medieval combat. The battle scenes of *Outlaw King* are too chaotic to come off as either rousing or terrifying, suggesting that Mackenzie (who tends to do his best work with smaller ensembles) was simply overwhelmed by crowds.

There are just enough characteristically imaginative passages to make the film worthwhile. The opening sequence—which seems to transpire in an unbroken eight-minute shot—is perhaps the best in the entire picture, with Mackenzie's roving camera communicating a sense of curiosity about the past that evokes such medieval epics as *Andrei Rublev* (1966) and *Marketa Lazarová* (1967). In this scene, the film introduces its characters, setting, and central power dynamics with the fluidity of Mackenzie's best work. *Outlaw King* loses that sense of fluidity soon after, the stunning long takes giving way to choppy editing (which makes me wonder if the director's first cut of the film, which was 20 minutes longer than the present version, maintained the aesthetic of the opening scene), but Mackenzie still man-

ages to assert his artistic personality through the relationship between Robert and his wife, Elizabeth. King Edward of England marries off Elizabeth, his goddaughter, to Robert early in the film to improve English-Scottish relations. The political relationship quickly disintegrates, but Elizabeth and Robert grow to love each other—in part because Elizabeth demands that Robert treat her like an equal in their partnership. This sort of enlightened romance may seem highly unlikely within a medieval setting, but it provides a welcome antidote to the chauvinism one usually encounters in films that take place in this period.

Outlaw King also stands in contrast to many medieval films (*The Seventh Seal*, *Rublev*, *Perceval*) in that it doesn't valorize the role of Christianity in pre-modern Europe; Robert remains the film's hero even though he has no respect for religion. In one scene, he kills a political rival in a church; in another, his men slay English soldiers observing a Palm Sunday service. Such moments speak to the brutality of the medieval era, showing that, for some men, Christianity was nothing more than window dressing on lives determined by brute force. I wished for more sturdy insights like these; generally speaking, the film's most interesting historical details tend to arrive in cutaway shots, which make enough of an impression to remind viewers of Mackenzie's considerable talent. Here's hoping his next feature will be less compromised than this one. **A**

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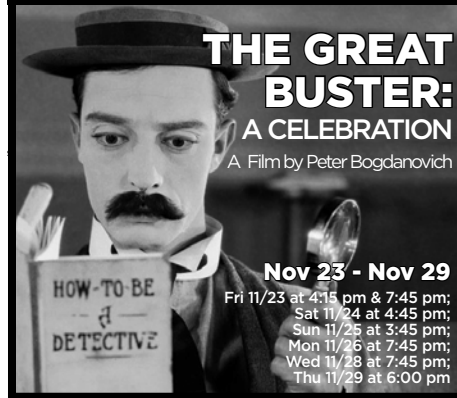
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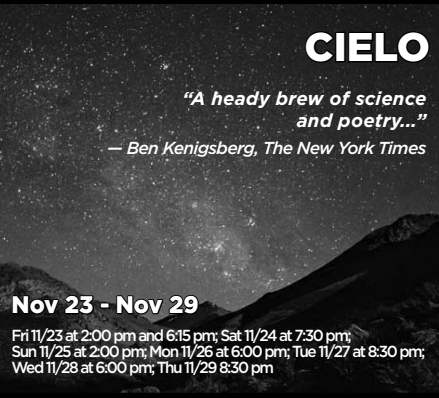
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Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald

MOVIES

A real squib

Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald reaches the magical limits of the *Harry Potter* universe.

By LEAH PICKETT

The pattern is familiar. Strike gold with a film slated to be the first in a series, proceed with said series to a satisfying conclusion, then attach more films—prequels, sequels, and reboots—until viewer fatigue sets in and a backlash ensues. Though J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series begat eight film adaptations, a theme park, and a fixed pop culture legacy, the author seems to have taken the wrong lessons from her forebears. As the *Hobbit* trilogy, the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series, and *Solo: A Star Wars Story* have shown, just because one can append more films to a bankable franchise doesn't mean one should.

Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald is the second of a planned five films in a prequel series to the *Harry Potter* franchise, which ended with *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 2* in 2011 and rebooted with *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* in 2016. If reading the previous sentence felt exhausting, the new movie will amplify that feeling and add a dash of disenchantment for anyone who cannot be wooed by cuddly creatures alone.

The Crimes of Grindelwald is indeed a cash grab, though not a valueless one. The elaborate sets, costumes, and computer-

generated critters are aptly spellbinding. A scene in which a middle-aged Albus Dumbledore (Jude Law, twinkly-eyed) walks with his former student and *Fantastic Beasts* protagonist, Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne), through foggy, early 20th-century London evokes Disney's *Mary Poppins* in its old-fashioned production design and nostalgic whimsy.

The film's principal drawback is its narrative: largely nonsensical and bloated with new characters, subplots, and postscripts to the source material about which the viewer is given little reason to care. Although penned by Rowling and directed by David Yates, who helmed the last four films in the *Harry Potter* series, *The Crimes of Grindelwald* feels hollow and disconnected, like it could have been made by anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of Rowling's wizarding world.

Darting between the magical environs of New York, London, and Paris in 1927, the film hinges on Newt answering Professor Dumbledore's call to find teen runaway Credence (Ezra Miller) before dark wizard at large Gellert Grindelwald (Johnny Depp) can weaponize the boy. Supposedly Credence is the last in a powerful, pure-blooded wizarding line

and the key to Grindelwald's final solution of pure-blood wizards ruling over half-bloods and nonmagical people. A twist ending, in the most generous use of that term, suggests Credence's true lineage with an anticlimactic thud. This is because Credence, the franchise's apparent linchpin, is a dull character, and Newt is so sweet and pure that he makes angst, good-hearted Harry look like an anti-hero by comparison. Meanwhile, Newt's adult American friends Jacob and Queenie (Dan Fogler and Alison Sudol) are equally unrelatable, cartoonish, and annoying in that they're even more childlike than Harry's school pals Ron and Hermione. Meatier characters played by Zoë Kravitz and Katherine Waterston are

more interesting, but they deserve a stronger story than this.

The problem with perpetually building on an established world is that, eventually, the seams begin to show. A universe that used to make sense in its own fantastical way now feels slippery and confused, riddled with retcons. That *The Crimes of Grindelwald*'s most affecting moments involve Dumbledore and take place at Hogwarts crystallizes the *Fantastic Beasts* franchise's core predicament: Rowling's original story is where this world's true magic lies. The offshoots, though lovely to behold, are simulacra. **B**

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MOVIES

RR At Eternity's Gate

Willem Dafoe plays Vincent Van Gogh in this expressive biopic, concentrated on the Dutch painter's later years in Arles, France, shortly before his death at age 37. Director Julian Schnabel, a painter himself, rightly focuses on Van Gogh's most prolific period, in which the artist churned out more than 200 paintings in 15 months, with minimal dialogue and striking visual poetry. Other influential characters—Van Gogh's loving brother and benefactor, Theo (Rupert Friend) and his demonstrative peer, the French painter Paul Gauguin (Oscar Isaac)—drift into the film, reminding the painter to soak up the vivid, quotidian ephemera of his surroundings when he is, for the most part, living in solitude. Despite being in his early 60s, Dafoe is perfect for this role, his stretchy, craggy face itself a canvas on which to display the artist's tangled interior life. Dafoe fully commits to his performance, as does Schnabel to the painter's vision and humanity. The result is a conspicuous fusion of actor, director, and subject: three souls connecting, wedded to art.

—LEAH PICKETT PG-13, 110 min. Landmark's Century Centre, River East 21

RR Call Her Ganda

The 2014 murder of a transgender Filipino woman by a U.S. Marine provides the jumping-off point for this potent and eye-opening documentary, which delivers history lessons about America's presence in the Philippines, the latter country's transgender community, and the rise of dictator Rodrigo Duterte. The movie isn't overwhelmed by any of these subjects; director PJ Raval fluidly interweaves them into an effective nonfiction legal drama that charts the fallout of the murder and the Marine's subsequent trial. Raval also paints a commanding portrait of Meredith Talusan, a transgender Filipino-American journalist who devoted years to reporting on the case. Her tireless efforts to make the world know about the murder—and what it reveals about unchecked American privilege—prove her to be an exemplar of journalistic integrity. In English and subtitled Tagalog.

—BEN SACHS 97 min. Fri 11/23, 7 and 9 PM; Sat 11/24, 3, 5, 7, and 9 PM; Sun 11/25, 1, 3, 5, and 7 PM; Mon 11/26–Thu 11/29, 7 and 9 PM. Facets Cinematheque

Cielo

This documentary alternates between profiles of astrophysicists working at planetariums in Chile's Atacama Desert, where the relative absence of man-made structures allows for undisturbed views of the night sky, and the people who live in the region. The formal strategy enables director Alison McAlpine to consider ancient myths about earth's origins alongside contemporary investigations of the cosmos; aiming for an unbiased perspective, McAlpine generates a sense of wonder from both spiritual and scientific modes of thought. The film doesn't achieve much more than that—even at just 78 minutes, it feels somewhat redundant and overlong. Still there are plenty of beautiful passages, particularly when McAlpine employs time-lapse photography to show the movements of the stars over the course of a night. In English and subtitled French and Spanish. —BEN SACHS 78 min. Fri 11/23, 2 and 6:15 PM; Sat 11/24, 7:30 PM; Sun 11/25, 2 PM; Mon 11/26, 6 PM; Tue 11/27, 8:30 PM; Wed 11/28, 6 PM; and Thu 11/29, 8:30 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Creed II

Battle fatigue sets in roughly halfway through this eighth installment of Sylvester Stallone's *Rocky* franchise, a sequel to the 2015 spin-off *Creed*. Although *Rocky IV* (1985) is the primary reference, tropes from almost every previous film in the series abound as Adonis Creed (Michael B. Jordan) becomes the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, marries his sweetheart (Tessa Thompson), and becomes a dad. But he soon falls victim to debilitating self-doubt after being viciously beaten by Ukrainian behemoth Viktor Drago (Florian "Big Nasty" Munteanu), whose father Ivan (Dolph Lundgren) killed Adonis's father Apollo—coach Rocky's friend and rival—in the ring decades ago. Even though the match and rematch with Viktor are spectacularly choreographed, shot, and edited, the sequences in between detailing Adonis's domestic life and physical and emotional recovery temporarily shift the movie into neutral, where it coasts a little too long. Still, there's something deeply satisfying about the film's treatment of father-son relationships; it takes them seriously, assigning them due value, and makes the boxers, young and old, relatable as human beings

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rather than superhuman punching bags. Directed by Steven Caple Jr.; with Wood Harris, Russell Hornsby, and Phylicia Rashad. —**ANDREA GRONVALL** PG-13, 130 min. AMC Dine-In Theatres Block 37, ArcLight Chicago, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14 Theaters, Cicero Showplace 14, Crown Village 18, Ford City, Lake, Logan, New 400, River East 21, Showplace 14 Galewood Crossings, Showplace ICON, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11

The Front Runner

Only two flaws mar this energetic, wry drama about Colorado senator Gary Hart's failed 1988 bid for the U.S. presidency. First, although Hugh Jackman, one of our most charismatic actors, nails the candidate's lofty vision, seriousness of purpose, confidence, and occasional wonky streak, he surprisingly fails to project the tremendous sparkle that made Hart a liberal Democratic crusader in the JFK tradition. Second, perhaps not trusting the viewer's intelligence, writer-director Jason Reitman (*Up in the Air*, *Juno*) and cowriter Jay Carson (*House of Cards*) repeatedly belabor the point that the implosion of Hart's campaign, after his liaison with model Donna Rice (Sara Paxton) was exposed, marked a turning point in American social history. Adapted from Matt Bai's bestseller *All the Truth Is Out: The Week Politics Went Tabloid*, the movie has a seductively dishy feel as *Washington Post* editor Ben Bradlee (Alfred Molina) and *Miami Herald* publisher Bob Martindale (a composite character played by Kevin Pollak) compete for a big story while redrawing the boundaries between

gossip and investigative reporting. But arguably the best supporting performances come from Mamoudou Athie as *Post* scribe AJ Parker (also a composite) and Steve Zissis as real-life *Herald* newshound Tom Fiedler, two dogged correspondents caught in the fray, who at the same time propel the media tsunami that turns Hart into late-night TV monologue fodder. Most fascinating is the film's subtext that the blame for our present cultural morass doesn't rest solely with politicians or the media; in a way, they're only gladiators, thrashing to amuse an enervated citizenry that demands entertainment 24/7. With Vera Farmiga, J.K. Simmons, and Molly Ephraim.

—**ANDREA GRONVALL** R, 113 min. Crown Village 18, River East 21, Showplace ICON

Robin Hood

This hyperactive adventure movie about the legendary 13th century brigand and champion of the downtrodden

doesn't remotely qualify as a period piece, so relentlessly do the filmmakers pile on anachronisms, presumably in a bid to appear relevant to youthful audiences. Taron Egerton, a far cry from his predecessors Errol Flynn, Sean Connery, Kevin Costner, Russell Crowe, and Douglas Fairbanks, plays Robin of Loxley, a noble drafted to serve in the Crusades and fight Arabs whose battle tactics resemble the Taliban's. Back in England, his nemesis, the jackbooted Sheriff of Nottingham (Ben Mendelsohn), swaggers and bellows like an SS Reichsführer, while Robin's beloved Marian (Eve Hewson) flashes more décolletage than a Bond girl. There's also a horse chase through a grimy mining camp that rips off both *Blade Runner* and the chariot race in *Ben Hur*. It's silly stuff, so insubstantial that even after any vicarious thrills over the medieval one percent getting shafted, the viewer is likely to feel he or she is the one being fleeced. TV veteran Otto Bathurst directed; with Jamie Foxx, F. Murray Abraham, and Jamie Dornan as a sequel

ARTS & CULTURE

At *Eternity's Gate*

hook. —**ANDREA GRONVALL** PG-13, 116 min. AMC Dine-In Theatres Block 37, ArcLight Chicago, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14 Theaters, Cicero Showplace 14, Crown Village 18, Ford City, River East 21, Showplace 14 Galewood Crossings, Showplace ICON, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11

RR Roma

Set in the early 70s and based largely on experiences from his childhood, this eighth feature by Alfonso Cuarón follows Cleo (Yalitza Aparicio, whose silent expressiveness recalls that of Falconetti in *The Passion of Joan of Arc*), a live-in housemaid for an upper-middle-class family in Mexico City, while she contends with an unexpected pregnancy amidst domestic and political turmoil. As in some of his earlier films (*Y Tu Mamá También*, *A Little Princess*, *Children of Men*), Cuarón explores the dynamic between the affluent and the underprivileged, though the result is ambiguous here. There's no denying, however, that Cuarón is a master of his craft; also serving as the film's co-editor and cinematographer (this was shot in widescreen and exquisite black-and-white—it's a remarkable technical achievement, the year's best), he develops form and plot harmoniously. In Cuarón's films, cinema conjures up its own world, and this one provides the chance to explore it with him more intimately than ever before. In Spanish and Mixtec with subtitles. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** R, 135 min. Streaming on Netflix. 



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LONG LIVE JOHN WALT



John Walt performs as Dinner With John during a Pivot Gang showcase at Lincoln Hall on January 6, 2017—about a month before he was killed. His mother says, “That was one of the best days of his life.”

📷 COURTESY OF NACHELLE PUGH

Saba’s *Care for Me* memorializes his cousin, friend, and Pivot Gang cofounder, whose generous spirit also survives in the John Walt Foundation—which holds its flagship concert fund-raiser this weekend.

By LEOR GALIL

Walter Long Jr. dies at the end of Saba’s “Prom/King.” In the penultimate song from Saba’s raw and vulnerable 2018 album, *Care for Me*, he raps about his kindhearted cousin—best known by the stage name John Walt—for seven and a half minutes. The track begins with Walt finding Saba a date for prom at St. Joseph High in 2011. It portrays their deepening friendship as founding members of hip-hop collective Pivot Gang, which formed less than a year later. As the song ends, Saba receives a call from Walt’s mom on February 8, 2017, asking if he’s heard from her son. In “Prom/King” Saba doesn’t say what happened that day, but on *Care for Me*’s opening track, he’s already told us Walt was killed.

In the hours after Walt died, the news spread fast, and Saba was far from the only one grieving. He and his older brother, Pivot Gang rapper-producer Joseph Chilliams, were supposed to perform with Noname that night at Metro, but they never made it. The next morning, “John Walt” was trending on Twitter in Chicago, and by the afternoon, *Fact* magazine and the *Fader* had published obituaries. The following week, his family held a memorial at Young Chicago Authors, a West Town nonprofit that helped nurture Walt, his Pivot pals, Noname, and countless other stars in the city’s hip-hop and poetry scenes.

“YOU KNOW HOW POP STARS FOCUS ON THE SINGLE? WALT COULD MAKE HITS, MORE THAN ANY OF US.”

—John Walt’s cousin and Pivot Gang
comrade Joseph Chilliams

So many people filled YCA’s second-floor space that members of Walt’s family had trouble getting in.

Among the many homages to Walt is the high-profile release *Care for Me*. Since dropping the album in April, Saba has earned Best New Music from Pitchfork, received a glowing *Rolling Stone* profile, and performed its songs for an NPR Tiny Desk concert. At the end of this month he’ll embark on his first tour of Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea, and he’s already announced a European tour for 2019. Throughout this banner year, as Saba became one of Chicago hip-hop’s newest crossover stars, his cousin, collaborator, and best friend has never been far from his mind.

Just as important to Saba as his own career is the John Walt Foundation, which he launched last year with Walt’s mother, Nachele Pugh. The nonprofit aims to provide money, mentoring, and other support to young Chicagoans in the arts, and though it’s starting small, with no office or paid staff, Pugh has big ambitions: inspired by YCA, she’d eventually like to help build a youth creative space in Austin. Last month, the foundation announced the inaugural class of five John Walt Foundation Fellows, each of whom was awarded a \$1,000 grant to further their creative careers.

The nonprofit’s fund-raising efforts include soliciting private donations, hosting benefit dinners, and throwing a big annual show called John Walt Day around the time of Walt’s birthday. Last year’s John Walt Day sold out the House of Blues and doubled as a launch party for the foundation, which got its 501(c)(3) certification in January 2018. Saba, Chilliams, and Pivot Gang comrades MFñ Melo and Frsh Waters performed at the first John Walt Day, and they’ll all return for the second one at Concord Music Hall on Saturday, November 24.

The members of Pivot Gang have appeared at huge festivals—Lollapalooza, Mamby on the Beach, Pitchfork—but John Walt Day matters more to them than all those put together. “I’m trying to figure out a way to make it the best show that I’ve ever given,” says Chilliams, who’s also a cousin and collaborator of Walt’s. “These are the biggest venues that we’ve ever done, and we’re selling them out, for him. It definitely helps put a smile on all our faces, and we get to take some time to reminisce. And people who never knew him, at the very least, know how much he meant to us.”

Even in a hip-hop scene overpopulated with larger-than-life personalities, Walt made his presence felt. Though often shy with strangers, with people he trusted he was warm, gregarious, and fiercely loyal. He never achieved Saba’s level of success, but he tirelessly supported his friends—and he showed great promise as an artist himself. In the early 2010s, a few of his songs became favorites with the teen open-mike scenes at YCA and the Harold Washington Library’s youth-oriented creative space, YouMedia, and in 2013 his track “Kemo Walk” was a minor local sensation. In 2017 he changed his stage name to Dinner With John, and he was about to drop his first mixtape under that name when he was killed.

Walt’s family knows hip-hop too. In the early 90s his mother, Nachele Pugh, performed as a dancer with two future members of Chicago’s rap royalty—Never of Crucial Conflict and DaWreck of Triple Darkness—in a group she’d rather not

name. “She was like my sister, so she was easy to work with,” DaWreck says. “I was basically doing all the choreography for the group—they had to do all the moves I made up. She was pretty cool.” Pugh left when she became pregnant with Walt, the first of her three children, and he was born November 25, 1992.

Growing up, Walt gravitated more toward sports than music. Chilliams’s first memory of him involves a wrestling match when Walt was four and he was six. “An older cousin of mine was like, ‘Y’all should wrestle,’” he says. “I wrestled many a time, wrestling was very popular, but halfway through I realized that this was not like normal wrestling. I was getting balled up. He was serious—the real deal.”

Walt lived in Austin with Pugh and his stepdad, Tyrone Jones, a few blocks south of where Saba and Chilliams grew up in their maternal grandparents’ house. Pugh’s uncle is Saba and Chilliams’s maternal grandfather, so the kids weren’t especially close cousins—they’d only see one another a few times a year for big family events. When Saba was six and Walt was eight, they were far from friends. “He used to push me around and take my shoes,” Saba says. “That was our relationship for years—he was my older cousin who I damn near hated ‘cause he used to bully me.”

Walt attended St. Malachy School, a Catholic elementary and middle school on the Near West Side. “He’s always been that kid that everybody know in school—he was in kindergarten and he was friends with the eighth graders,” Pugh says. “He really wanted to be a basketball star. He was always gonna buy me a house and a red car.”

By middle school, Walt was already tenacious about pursuing his goals. When a basketball friend who’d hit a growth spurt insisted it’d happened because he ate lots of tomatoes, Walt decided he wanted a piece of that. “I’m like, ‘Walt, I’m not buying tomatoes, because Josh did not get that tall be-

cause he was buying tomatoes,’” Pugh says. “Every day he was eating tomatoes, and, you know, ‘Can we stop at the store and get tomatoes?’”

Pugh describes herself as overprotective, and she thinks it rubbed off on Walt; even as an adult he’d tell her his plans for the evening, and he’d ask his friends to do the same for him. Pugh says her son was sheltered, and when as a kid he found himself in a situation that made him uncomfortable, he’d call her to come get him. One day in high school, Walt wore a leather coat his father had bought him and attracted the wrong kind of attention on his morning CTA ride. “He called me: ‘Mom, can you pick me up from school today?’ He said so many people kept asking him where did he get that jacket from, and it scared him,” Pugh says. “The people that was asking him wasn’t other kids—it was adults that looked kinda shady, and he thought that somebody was gonna try to rob him. He never wore that jacket again.”

Walt attended Gordon Technical High School (now DePaul College Prep) until his senior year, when he lost his Link Unlimited scholarship and his parents could no longer afford the school—at that point he transferred to Austin College & Career Academy. Saba, who’d started his freshman year at St. Joseph High in west-suburban Westchester when he was 13, had the same scholarship, intended to provide resources and mentoring to African-American high school students. Saba and Walt saw each other during Link’s Summer Learning Program and occasionally through other Link activities. They both graduated in 2011, when Saba was 16 and Walt was 18.

“The thing that brought us together would be girls,” Saba says. Shortly before graduation, Saba was looking for a prom date, and Walt set him up with a childhood friend. Walt was preparing for prom too—his second of the season—but Pugh didn’t want to pay for it. “I’m like, I’m not buying another suit, shoes, haircut—none of that stuff,” Pugh says. “If you’re going to this prom, better figure it out.” Walt managed to Frankensteintogether a suit from pieces loaned by friends, and he asked Saba if he could borrow \$30. Saba had to share his address with Walt so he could walk over to get the money—they’d never seen each other’s houses before. “After that we were pretty much locked in as BFFs,” Saba says.

Walt had a scholarship to play basketball for Saint Louis Christian College in Florissant, Missouri, and before he left in fall 2011 he spent much of his time on the court with Saba and Chilliams. That same summer, Walt also discovered that his cousins had started a hip-hop crew—but he wouldn’t join them for another few months.

In 2008, long before Pivot, Saba and Chilliams cofounded a group called the Rally with four other St. Joseph kids (including MFñ Melo) and a cousin they lived with named Von. The Rally recorded in a studio Saba and Chilliams built in their grandparents’ basement. “It’s a grind, and we didn’t know that starting out—we figured you make music, it’s good music, you put it out, you become famous,” Melo says. “We wasn’t even putting it out, we was keeping it, so why do we feel entitled to have anything happening for us?”

Walt wanted in, even though he was about to leave town. “We were like, ‘No, we were already doing this thing, why would we let you in? We haven’t even heard your music— ➔

The core members of Pivot Gang on a recent trip to Los Angeles: Joseph Chilliams, Dae Dae, Frsh Waters, Squeak, MFN Melo, and Saba  BLAIR BROWN



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we don't even know how serious you are about this,' but he made a mixtape damn near the week after," Chilliams says. "We were like, 'What. The fuck.' When he puts his head down and gets to work on anything, it's getting done. And at that time it was like, 'OK, we can watch and see.'"

At SLCC, Walt kept at his music during spare hours, sharing it with his friends and his mom. Pugh would offer constructive criticism. "I'm like, 'I have no idea what you talkin' about—can you use a different word here?'" she says. "He'd be like, 'Ma, it's not school!' And I'm like, 'I know it's not school, but you have to be creative and utilize your vocabulary.'"

By the start of 2011, most of the original members of the Rally had stopped showing up, and the group began a transition. Frsh Waters, a friend of Von's, became a regular presence in their basement studio shortly after Walt moved to Missouri. His first day there, he and Chilliams used a beat of Saba's to record the song "Chill Taught Me." "That was pretty much the first Pivot song, but it wasn't Pivot at the time," Chilliams says.

Frsh soon heard about Walt. "They had a folder in they iTunes, like, 'John Walt,'" he says. "He had, like, five mixtapes in that bitch. I'm thinkin' it's, like, somebody that's bussin',

just an emerging artist or something. They like, 'Yeah man, that's our cousin. He at school right now—he gonna be back, though. He be knockin' out work.'" Walt lasted only one semester at Saint Louis Christian College, returning to Chicago in December 2011 and enrolling at the downtown campus of Robert Morris University, across the street from Harold Washington Library and YouMedia. By 2012, he was part of his cousins' new group, christened Pivot Gang after a gag in a 1999 episode of *Friends*: as Chandler and Rachel try to help Ross move a couch up a stairwell, he barks at them to "Pivot!"

In 2011, Frsh had introduced most of Pivot Gang to the two open mikes that've been most important to current Chicago hip-hop: WordPlay at YCA and Lyricist Loft at YouMedia. As the crew became regulars at both, they tapped into a community of collaborators, some of whom Saba began recording in Pivot's basement studio: Noname, Mick Jenkins, Alex Wiley, Lucki, Jean Deaux (another cousin of Walt's), Dally Auston, Vic Mensa, Chance the Rapper.

It was tough to break in at Lyricist Loft. "A lot of times you go to the open mike and it's 50 names on the list, and there's only time for 20 people—a lot of us don't get called," Saba

says. "Walt was the one who, like, if I write my name on the list and he saw that they wasn't about to call me, he would go and have a talk with the host. 'Hey, you about to call his name next,' like that. We had to, like, bully our way into the space, and it worked—it was crazy. That's kind of where Pivot became an outside thing—like a thing that left my grandma's basement."

Walt's steadfast support for his friends extended beyond Pivot. "He was a lot of people's biggest fan," says YCA artistic director Kevin Coval. "His championing of young artists and established artists helped people continue, 'cause you felt like he was genuinely excited, down, interested in what you were doing. I think that that also began to influence what he was doing."

In February 2012, Frsh became the first Pivot rapper to get a Lyricist Loft feature, which is a 15-minute block instead of the typical one-song or one-poem slot. "When Frsh did that, it was just like a Pivot feature—we all were on there, rapping all of these songs," Chilliams says. "It felt like people believed in what we were trying to do, believed in Pivot, and Pivot was bigger than just us. From that point on, we just started trying to fuck shit up." By the end of the month, Saba got a Lyricist

Loft feature, and Walt had his booked for early March.

In early 2013, Frsh began serving a prison sentence, from which he wouldn't return till July 2017. The collective won't say why he got locked up, and because he doesn't share his government name, it's tough to find out. "When Frsh went away—that's a defining moment in our relationship with each other," Saba says. "We definitely became more of a family after that." Frsh asked Pivot to look after his younger brother, Squeak, while he was gone. In January 2013 the crew had started using their first outside studio, and soon Squeak was driving them there—it was inside the Fort Knox space in Old Irving Park and run by video-production company Heart of the City (cofounded by Jon Cuevas, one of Pivot's managers at the time).

Squeak hadn't shown much interest in music, but a single day in the studio with Pivot changed that. "I'm listening to what they all made that day—I was like, 'Wow, they're actually talking about shit,'" Squeak says. "I was like, 'All right, I just don't wanna be around just to be around—I have to do something.'" He tried his hand at engineering, and in 2015 he took up producing and DJing. His first DJ gig was with Walt at North Bar in October 2015. "Whenever he'd get a show, I was there right with him," Squeak says.

In October 2013, Pivot Gang dropped the collaborative mixtape *Jimmy* in honor of Frsh. Walt also began to flex his muscles as a solo artist, first with the song "Liu Kang." "Whenever he did it at YouMedia, it was like a party," Chilliams says. "Watching everybody just instantly get up and start dancing, asking him to do the song over—it's an open mike, you only do it one time—it was very inspirational." Walt uploaded "Liu Kang" to Soundcloud on November 6, 2013, and a couple days later Fake Shore Drive named it the best song of the week. "You know how pop stars focus on the single? Walt could make hits, more so than any of us," Chilliams says.

"Liu Kang" came out in the run-up to Walt's December 2013 mixtape, *Get Happy 2.0*, which he celebrated by headlining Tonic Room with Saba, Chris Crack, and Mick Jenkins. Walt's ferocious rapping on that mixtape, sometimes bordering on the west-side chopper style, reminds Saba of Walt's uncle, who rapped under the name Tha Heartstoppa. ("We used to have to steal his albums, 'cause our parents didn't want us listening to it," Saba says. "It was some super gangsta shit.") *Get Happy 2.0* closes with the bittersweet, ebullient "Kemo Walk," which hinted at the melodic blend of R&B and rap that Walt would experiment with for the rest of his career.

By early 2014, the members of Pivot had begun branching out to professional studios beyond the Heart of the City space, though no one did so as tirelessly as Walt. "If he wasn't trying to get in with somebody else around the scene that was doing something—getting in their studio—he had an app on his phone. He'd go in his garage, and he'll do it on his own," Melo says. "He gonna make it work—he's gonna find a session somewhere."

For about a year Walt was a daily fixture at the Wicker Park home of producer Dae Dae, then half of beat-making duo Chad (he'd eventually work on *Care for Me*). All of Pivot came through for sessions in Dae Dae's basement—one of his roommates, Ken Ross, produced a couple tracks on the 2014 Saba mixtape *Comfort Zone*. "Walt would write to everything, all

the time, no matter what beat we were making," Dae Dae says. "It didn't even matter if it was terrible." Walt encouraged Dae Dae to try new experiments and even to sing (he contributed vocals to *Care for Me* tracks "Calligraphy" and "Smile").

"Walt would always be there and be hyping me up," Dae Dae says. "I was doubting myself a lot, and Walt would just always be like, 'This is fire, dude, you're going crazy!'" That year Dae Dae got to know everyone in Pivot, but he got closest to Walt. He remembers Walt impishly pecking out the melody to 2 Chainz' "I'm Different" on a piano and deliberately screwing up the end. "He purposely would do the last one wrong, over and over, to piss everyone in the room off," Dae Dae says. "He was always just doing some funny-ass dumb shit."

As prolific as Walt was, he released just a smattering of singles after *Get Happy 2.0*, among them the first song Squeak produced, 2015's "Work for Me." As Walt smoothed out the aggressive rapping and rough-edged percussion in his music, he changed his stage name to match; in 2016 he became Dinner With John. He planned to release his first Dinner With John mixtape in January 2017, just before a Pivot showcase at Lincoln Hall—it would be Saba's first big hometown show since dropping *Bucket List Project*, his national breakthrough. Saba cautioned Walt to wait. "I was like, 'You don't wanna drop a surprise album after your name change. It's gonna take people time—maybe just drop a single instead,'" he says. Walt took Saba's advice, and Pugh bought him new clothes for the show. "That was one of the best days of his life," she says.

Walt decided to drop his mixtape the following month. On February 7, he was hanging with Saba when they noticed a Timehop photo of the two of them on Facebook. "We just started talking, in detail, about everything that led us to where we were at," Saba says. "And then he died the next day."

In the afternoon of February 8, Walt was stabbed to death in the Fulton Market District. He'd been riding the Green Line to Austin when he allegedly got in a scuffle with a man named Kevin Alexander, who's since pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder and is being held on \$500,000 bail. Melo says Alexander had previously tried to steal Walt's coat, and when Walt spotted Alexander on the train, he texted Melo in case anything happened.

At the YCA vigil for Walt, Kevin Coval recalls, Pugh first publicly expressed the desire to build something to honor her son. When Saba came to her house for a CBS 2 interview about Walt's death, Pugh floated the idea of a foundation. "He said, 'I want you to get together with Kevin, 'cause Kevin can show us what to do,'" Pugh says. "I'm like, 'OK. I guess that means you're my cofounder.'"

In April 2017 Pugh began talking to YCA executive director Rebecca Hunter about launching the John Walt Foundation. "Her ideas were already pretty formed," Hunter says. "Really all she needed, in the first phase, was to have a fiscal sponsor to begin to house any money she was fund-raising." YCA

stepped into that role. Pugh and Saba also received advice and feedback from Ayesha Jaco, who'd cofounded Lupe Fiasco's nonprofit M.U.R.A.L., and from Donnie Smith and Che "Rhymefest" Smith of Donda's House (now Art of Culture).

After the John Walt Foundation received its 501(c)(3) certification early this year, it began soliciting applicants, ages 14 to 23, for its inaugural grants. One hundred and sixty people applied, and this past summer Pugh asked for help selecting

the final five—among the people she consulted were DaWreck, poets Britteney Black Rose Kapri and Raych Jackson, and Frsh Waters. Frsh says he helps Pugh however he can. "I been surprised just to see her strength, and that's given me strength to go hard," Frsh says. "These challenges that we face, they could make or break you."

In March 2017, Walt was supposed to go on Saba's *Bucket List*

Project tour with the rest of Pivot. His friends dealt with their grief differently—Saba says he didn't face it fully until he began working on *Care for Me*. "It was such a therapeutic process," he says. "I was able to talk about things and kind of use the words that I didn't even know that I had. It felt like I was channeling some other shit, just writing things, and not trying to overthink the music."

In August 2017, Saba and Dae Dae flew to Oakland for their first session with *Care for Me* coproducer Daoud. In a few months they made about 90 instrumentals, and *Care for Me* began to take shape that winter—that's when Saba says "Prom/King" came into focus. "It was still summer when I was like, 'All right, I got a ten-minute song, tell the whole story,'" Saba says. "I wanted to take some of the stories that involved me and Walt's relationship together. And be able to give people a glimpse of who Walt was, what he was like, what he was received as, what other people viewed him as, in this song, while telling the story of how it felt."

The surviving members of Pivot plan to release Walt's Dinner With John mixtape—and they've got hours and hours of additional material he recorded. Right now there are only a handful of songs on Walt's Soundcloud account, two of them released posthumously. More people know him through *Care for Me* than through his own music.

Saba has yet to perform "Prom/King" live, and he says he's only been able to listen to it a few times. The last voice on the track is Walt, from the hook to a song he and Saba worked on in 2014. "Just another day in the ghetto," he softly sings. "Oh, the streets bring sorrow / Can't get up today with their schedule / I just hope I make it till tomorrow."

While Walt was still alive, Pugh began paying the fees for his Soundcloud account, and she's made sure it remains active. She also responds to listeners who try to message Walt through the site. "That year leading up to when he passed, he told me, 'Ma, just believe in me—we doing big things, just believe in me,'" Pugh says. "I said, 'OK,' and I believe in him. I still believe in him." 

 @imLeor

PICK OF THE WEEK

Chicago label Futurehood showcases where queer artists can take hip-hop



KC Ortiz © JULIA HALE

FUTUREHOOD & FRIENDS WITH MISTER WALLACE, KC ORTIZ, THE VIXEN, KIDD KENN, ROY KINSEY, BLU BONE, ACEBOOMBAP, TRQPITECA, AND HIJO PRODIGO

Fri 11/23, 9 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$10. 18+

IN 2011, **ERIK WALLACE** (aka rapper Mister Wallace) and Anthony Pabey (aka producer Aceboombap) met at the Boystown cocktail lounge Wang's; four years later they launched Futurehood, a label that supports gay and transgender musicians of color. "My driving force was to create a space there that was what Boystown was not providing, giving, or sheltering," Pabey told the *Advocate* in 2016. He knew there was a thriving scene in the queer community, even if it wasn't as immediately apparent to all: "I really feel like the queer rappers are the purest form of what rap is and what hip-hop is." For Chicago's first Red Bull Music Festival, Futurehood has assembled a show that proves Pabey right. Among the performers are former

RuPaul's Drag Race contestant the Vixen, teenage drill sensation Kidd Kenn, and Roy Kinsey, whose February album *Blackie* is one of the year's best Chicago hip-hop releases. Filling the penultimate spot on the bill is KC Ortiz, a transgender woman originally from Mobile, Alabama, who on her debut 2016 mixtape, *Beach Street*, raps like she knows she should headline every show she's part of. Headlining it all is Mister Wallace, whose "It Girl" single, off his debut 2016 EP, *Faggot*, is an immediately intoxicating blur of dance and rap. Get there early for opener Blu Bone; his 2017 single "Red Raver," off his debut EP, *Into the Nebula*, shows there's still new territory worth exploring within hip-house. —LEOR GALIL

FRIDAY23

6LACK Summer Walker and Deante Hitchcock open. 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 4746 N. Racine, sold out.

Some musicians are intrigued by the charms of eclecticism, but when it comes to the sound of his music, Atlanta R&B singer 6lack (pronounced "black") never wavers from his focus. If you've heard his 2016 hit *Prblms*, you know what to expect from this year's *East Atlanta Love Letter* (LVRN): slow-to-mid-tempo grooves, minimal fuzzed-out beats with ambient synth chill, and laid-back vocals that shift between Auto-Tune whining and quasi hip-hop talk-singing. Lyrically, 6lack is resolutely moody and insular. "I wrote this in a hotel the size of a closet / Just to show I could do it," he sings in "Scripture," summing up the feeling of claustrophobic enervation. Even his boasts are half full of self-deprecation, such as on "Loaded Gun," where he sings, "I got women calling my phone like I owe them somethin' / It's kinda my fault / I guess I showed them somethin'." Following in the footsteps of Drake and the Weeknd, 6lack fuses indie-pop mope and R&B lover-man seduction into a smooth, slow, and sincere love bomb, a formula that also happens to be a marketing juggernaut—the album debuted at number three on the *Billboard* 200. Though both indie and R&B purists may find the formula irritating, there's an undeniable languid appeal in 6lack's hypnotic consistency. He only does one thing, but he does it well. —NOAH BERLATSKY

FUTUREHOOD & FRIENDS See *Pick of the Week* at left. Mister Wallace headlines; KC Ortiz, the Vixen, Kidd Kenn, Roy Kinsey, Blu Bone, Aceboombap, Trqpiteca, and Hijo Prodigio open. 9 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$10. 18+



Tropa Magica © CLARIZA REYES



Russian Circles © RYAN RUSSELL

RUSSIAN CIRCLES Bongripper and Sweet Cobra open. 9 PM, Metro, 3730 N. Clark, \$25, \$22 in advance. 18+

Following two sold-out stints at the Empty Bottle earlier this year, hometown “instru-metal” heroes Russian Circles reward their local legions once more with this Metro date the day after Thanksgiving. And there’s plenty to be thankful for, as the postmetal trio put on one helluva performance. Though it’s been two years since their most recent LP, *Guidance*, was released on Sargent House, with six excellent albums in their catalog, the band never lack for set-building options. The Metro’s potent sound system should accentuate their sonics, highlighting the glistening effects of guitarist Mike Sullivan, the deep distortions of bassist Brian Cook, and the clattering fills of drummer Dave Turncrantz. And not only is this a chance to see them twice in a year in their hometown, it’s a chance to catch them as they gear up for their seventh album, which they’ve been in the process of writing this fall. Opening the evening are two other beloved, long-running Chicago heavyweights, Bongripper and Sweet Cobra. Bongripper, a metaphorical child of doom legends Sleep, pushes fuzzed-out instrumental stoner metal to its limits, utilizing a massive sound and slowly shifting song structures to keep long-form music engaging. Meanwhile, Sweet Cobra—the only band of the night to feature vocals—has evolved in recent years, shifting from a melodic sludge-metal sound to a catchier posthardcore approach. In all, this is one stacked bill, reflecting how much the Chicago postmetal scene has to be thankful for. —**SCOTT MORROW**

TROPA MAGICA Avantist and Man Cub open. Sonorama DJs spin between sets. 9 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$12, \$10 in advance. 21+

In 2012, brothers David and Rene Pacheco emerged from East Los Angeles with Thee Commons, a band that blended elements of cumbia, chicha, surf, punk, psych, and more. Despite having all the ingredients for an excellent dance party, the group initially struggled to find a foothold in LA’s music scene, which like those of many major cities is often fragmented along genre, ethnic, and generational lines. But when Thee Commons finally built their own community, they hit their stride—and they hit it hard, electrifying fans from all walks of life with their high-energy music and over-the-top performances, which sometimes featured burlesque dancers, clowns, and/or guys in gorilla suits. In 2016, *LA Weekly* suggested that Thee Commons might be the best live band in town—and if they weren’t, they were certainly “damn near the top.” The group racked up a number of festival appearances, including last year’s Coachella, and were the subject of the 2017 documentary *Thee Commons: Ni de Aquí, Ni de Allá* (Burger). As the buzz surrounding them grew, though, their own perspectives and interests changed—and this spring the Pacheco brothers reinvented their band as Tropa Magica. Many of the Latin and Californian influences that fueled Thee Commons are still there on Tropa Magica’s debut EP from June, *Tropa Magica y la Muerte de los Commons*, as well as on the self-titled full-length they put out in September, and their sense of humor is intact too. But they’ve expanded their lineup and their sound, bringing new ➔

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Dec 01

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Dec 06

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Dec 08

K?D

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11.23

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

FIT FOR A KING / '88

11.25

SABRINA BENAIM

CLEMENTINE VON RADICS

11.30

KEYS N KRATES

12.02

THE CONTORTIONIST

INTERVALS

12.06

WITH CONFIDENCE

BROADSIDE

SLEEP ON IT / SMALL TALKS

12.07

TROPHY EYES / SEAWAY

MICROWAVE / CAN'T SWIM

HOT MULLIGAN

12.09

BROTHER ALI

DEM ATLAS

12.12

ROOSEVELT

12.16

THE HOMECOMING

FUN MONKEY / DIVISIONPOINT

RIP TOM / DAD HAT

12.19

NOTHING, NOWHERE

WICCA PHASE SPRINGS ETERNAL

12.20

THE AUDITION

12.21

VEIL OF MAYA

VCTMS / EL FAMOUS / DEVILLE

THE LEVITATED

12.27

EVERY AVENUE

12.31

GUIDED BY VOICES

01.26

GNASH

MALLRAT / GUARDIN

02.01

MIKE STUD

02.02

DOROTHY

SPIRIT ANIMAL

02.07

BRASSTRACKS

02.09

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY

CROWBAR / WEEDEATER

MOTHERSHIP

02.12

TONIGHT ALIVE

I THE MIGHTY / DOLL SKIN

02.23

CHERRY GLAZERR

PALEHOUND

03.02

YOU ME AT SIX

DREAMERS

03.14

ARKELLS

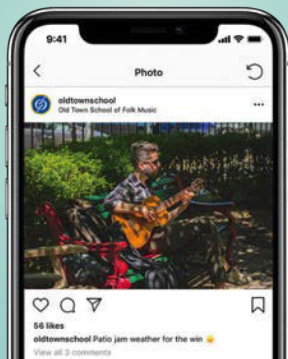
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continued from 31

playfulness to their orchestral arrangements and extra spaciness to their surreal adventures. This is feel-good music, but it's not fluffy feel-good music: there's enough subversion, mischief, and magic simmering below the surface to keep any misfit dancing. —JAMIE LUDWIG

SATURDAY 24

HEAVY MANNERS DJ Chuck Wren opens. 7 PM, Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont, \$15. 17+

In the early 80s, Chicago ska group Heavy Manners were an anomaly. Ska wouldn't completely catch on in the midwest till the genre's successful third wave in the 90s, but Heavy Manners helped plant those seeds in the decade before. Bassist Jimi Robinson, a reggae regular who frequently served as MC at hot spot Wild Hare, discovered London's two-tone scene while on a trip to Europe at the start of the 80s. Inspired, he began jamming with guitarist Mitch Kohlhausen on similar sounds when he returned home. Roughly half a year later, the pair connected with vocalist Kate Fagan, and the three of them placed an ad in the *Reader* for a drummer. Through the ad they found Frankie Hill, who formally joined on sax and brought along drummer Shel Lustig, then a WXRT DJ. Since the group made rock that sounded like reggae, they could play to different scenes, and as they could carve out their own niche, their impact on the city's music community grew. When Heavy Manners released their 1982 LP, *Politics & Pleasure* (on early Chicago punk label Disturbing Records), they celebrated with a sold-



The Marías @ JOE PERRI

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THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC

PIVOTAL CHICAGO MUSICIANS THAT SOMEHOW HAVE NOT GOTTEN THEIR JUST DUES by PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE



IN MEMORIAM

DANIEL SCANLAN

(WIZARDLY CHICAGO PERCUSSION IMPROVISER MICHAEL ZERANG RECENTLY POSTED ABOUT HIS OLD FRIEND & COMRADE DANIEL SCANLAN DYING WITH NO NEXT OF KIN IN A NURSING HOME IN FLORIDA ON AUGUST 27, SO I TALKED TO HIM TO WRITE A TRIBUTE. SCANLAN WAS BORN IN CHICAGO ON NOVEMBER 21, 1956, AND ZERANG MET HIM AT WRIGHT COLLEGE IN 1976, WHEN THEY WERE BOTH IN THEIR LATE TEENS—THEY TURNED OUT TO LIVE AROUND THE CORNER FROM EACH OTHER IN EDGEWATER. SCANLAN WAS LEARNING VIOLIN, ELECTRIC GUITAR, AND CORNET, AND ZERANG JOINED HIM ON DUMBEK—THE FIRST TIME HE'D PLAYED WITH ANYONE OUTSIDE HIS FAMILY. SCANLAN & ZERANG'S FIRST BAND WAS THE NEUTRINO ORCHESTRA, FORMED IN '77, WHICH ALSO INCLUDED BASSIST KENT KESSLER (WHO STILL WORKS WITH ZERANG TO DAY). SCANLAN LOVED AVANT-GARDE CLASSICAL, JAZZ, BLUES, COUNTRY, ROCK, AND GLOBAL FOLK, AND OFTEN PASSED ON HIS KNOWLEDGE IN PASSIONATE, DRUNKEN LECTURES/LISTENING SESSIONS. HE PERFORMED WITH A HUGE NUMBER OF BANDS IN THE 80s, AMONG THEM THE WONDERFULS, MUSICA MENTA, & THE LONG-RUNNING

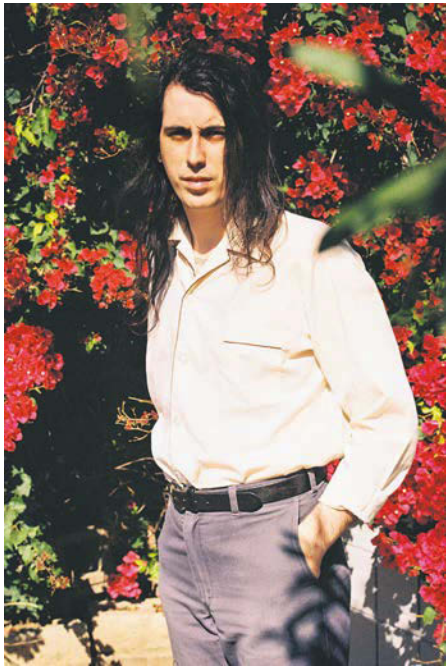
LIOF MUNIMULA (A TRIO WITH ZERANG AND DON MECKLEY, WHOSE INSTRUMENTS INCLUDED MODIFIED SHORTWAVE AND DRIPPING WATER). IN 1991 HE JOINED THE VANDERMARK QUARTET ALONGSIDE ZERANG & KESSLER, AND IN 1996 HE GUESTED ON VIOLIN ON "THIS IS MY HOUSE" BY THE LEGENDARY NRG ENSEMBLE. HE PUT OUT AN ALBUM THAT YEAR WITH ECLECTIC COUNTRY FOLK, GROUP CHURCH KEY AND ANOTHER IN '77 WITH FREEWHEELING PROG OUTFIT BROKEN WIRE (SCANLAN, ZERANG, JIM BAKER, AND FRED LONBERG-HOLM). HE KEPT STARTING BANDS TOO, INCLUDING SCANDAKE (A DUO WITH JIM BAKER) AND THE PHENOMENAL STRING QUARTET (WITH LONBERG-HOLM, BOB MARSH, AND JULIE POMERLEAU). SCANLAN'S CAREER SEEMS TO END A DECADE AGO, ABOUT THE TIME HE LEFT CHICAGO—ZERANG NOTES HIS FRIEND'S MERCURIAL PERSONALITY, BUT HE CAN'T EXPLAIN THAT ABRUPT SILENCE. SCANLAN LANDED IN THE NURSING HOME IN 2017, AFTER SUFFERING A BRAIN INJURY IN A ROBBERY ATTEMPT, AND HIS LONELY DEATH STANDS IN PAINFUL CONTRAST TO THE LOVE & RESPECT MANY CHICAGOANS FEEL FOR HIM. —MUCH THANKS TO M. ZERANG

TUNE INTO THE RADIO VERSION OF "THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC" ON "OUTSIDE THE LOOP" ON WGN RADIO 720 AM, SATURDAY AT 6AM WITH HOST MIKE STEPHEN. COMMENTS, IDEAS TO plasticcw@hotmail.com ARCHIVED @ OUTSIDETHELOOPRADIO.COM

out headlining show at Park West. Soon they were landing spots opening for international stars such as the Clash and Peter Tosh, who was so impressed with the group he offered to record them. Aside from their 1983 single "Say It!," the bulk of their Tosh-produced material came out long after the band broke up via a 1996 compilation, *Heavier Than Now* (NoVo). But in recent years, Heavy Manners

have sporadically reconvened for reunion shows, and in 2010 they dropped a taut EP titled *Get Me Outta Debt* (Jump Up). That same year Robinson decided to retire, and Joe Thomas joined Heavy Manners on bass. In July, Robinson passed away, and in tribute to him, tonight's "Skanksgiving" show will include video, photos, and personal anecdotes. —LEOR GALIL

MUSIC



Brandon Williams of Chastity © DANNY SCOTT LANE

MARÍAS *Triathlon headlines; the Marías and Girl Ultra open. 9 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, \$18, \$15 in advance. 21+*

The songs of the Marías have a laid-back vibe, but every guitar riff feels like it was precisely placed in an artfully curated sonic atmosphere that calls to mind grainy films from the golden age of Hollywood. The Los Angeles-based project of Josh Conway and María—who goes by her first name only in artistic settings, a la Beyoncé—have been breaking hearts with their dreamy psychedelic soul since 2016. In September, the Marías released

their second EP, *Superclean, Vol. II* (on their own Superclean label), and at just over 21 minutes, it leaves the listener wanting more. Singing in Spanish and English, María and Conway hazily harmonize about lovers and longing over a backdrop of velvety, reverb-drenched guitar punctuated by the occasional horn solo. It's an album to listen to while you daydream about the last person you kissed. Recently, the Marías collaborated with their current tourmates, New York soul-pop band Triathlon, on a single, "Drip." The track plays to the strengths of both groups, leaning into Triathlon's R&B sensibilities while simultaneously highlighting the Marías' soft romanticism. I'm hoping that this collaboration will lead to some live crossover between the two groups on their sharing the bill—fingers crossed. —ANNA WHITE

SUNDAY25

CHASTITY *Material Girls and No Men open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$10. 21+*

Chastity main man Brandon Williams grew up in the Toronto suburb of Whitby, roughly 30 minutes away from the big city. There his youth was dominated by church services until he became enamored with punk. At age 14, he began flocking to all-ages venue the Dungeon, in nearby suburb Oshawa, which by all accounts didn't have the cleanest reputation; when it closed in 2008, Protest the Hero front man Rody Walker told local news site Durham Region that the Dungeon was "one of the dirtiest clubs in all North America," and pop culture site A.Side wrote that Behemoth front man Adam "Nergal" Darski allegedly said it was the worst venue he'd ever played. But Williams emerged out of the grime with a clean sound. Chastity's combusive mutation of grunge hooks, shoegaze melodies, and posthardcore fury is as amiable as the type of early-90s alternative radio anthems made famous ➔

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DEC 04

DRACO ROSA

DEC 05

KIMBRA

DEC 06

PREOCCUPATIONS AND PROTOMARTYR

DEC 14

CLOUD NOTHINGS

NOV 23
THE MAIN SQUEEZE

DEC 01
THE LAST PODCAST ON THE LEFT

DEC 09
LUCHA LIBRE GALLI

NOV 24
HAR MAR SUPERSTAR AND SABRINA ELLIS

DEC 02
JIMMY CARR

DEC 12
THE OH HELLOS CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA

NOV 25
RED BULL MUSIC PRESENTS LAST NIGHT A DJ SAVED MY SOUL

DEC 03
SPEED RACK

DEC 13
WILLIAM ELLIOTT WHITMORE

NOV 26
THE DEAD SOUTH

DEC 07-08
RICHARD THOMPSON ELECTRIC TRIO

DEC 15
THE MUSIC OF THE BEATLES FOR KIDS

NOV 27
HELLO FROM THE MAGIC TAVERN

DEC 09
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DEC 09

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DEC 14

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NOV 28
JOHN BLU & FRIENDS

NOV 24
SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

NOV 26
SNEAKLIGHTS: BLACK MONDAY

NOV 29
SO YOU THINK YOU CAN KARAOKE: HIP HOP/R&B EDITION

NOV 24
THE 10TH ANNUAL BLACKOUT

NOV 27
TOLL FREE TUESDAYS

NOV 30
BEST OF BOTH WORLDS 2

NOV 25
SHAKE SUMTHIN' TWERK SUMTHIN'

NOV 27
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NOVEMBER 28	SUNNDOG
NOVEMBER 29	DJ SKID LICIOUS
NOVEMBER 30	JAMIE WAGNER BAND 10PM SPRINGBO
DECEMBER 2	THOMAS A MATECKI BAND
DECEMBER 3	PROSPECT FOUR 9PM
DECEMBER 6	SMILIN' BOBBY AND THE CLEMTONES
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 Jane Baxter Miller & Kent Kessler - Mark Miller
 Dennis J. Leise - The Hat Stretchers - Charlie King
 Joshlyn Lomax - Dave Drazen - Vernon Tonges

12/3 - "It's A Wonderful Life" Pop-Up Movie Night (SOLD OUT)
 12/5 - Jon Dee Graham / Ben de la Cour
 12/6 - Ron & Naomi's Christmas Special
 12/8 - Mike Cooley
 12/10 - "It's A Wonderful Life" Pop-Up Movie Night (SOLD OUT)
 12/14 - Off Broadway (Original Band Members)
 12/14 - Tish Hinojosa (SB)
 12/15 - Brave Combo Holiday Spectacular
 12/17 - "It's A Wonderful Life" Pop-Up Movie Night (SOLD OUT)
 12/20 - Country Night In Berwyn Holiday Roundup
 12/21 - The Redmonds Christmas Show
 12/22 - Ronnie Baker Brooks
 12/26 - "It's A Wonderful Life" Pop-Up Movie Night (SOLD OUT)
 12/28 - Terrapin Flyer
 12/29 - Webb Wilder & The Beatnecks
 12/31 - NEW YEAR'S EVE with Expo '76 (Club)
The Heavy Sounds in the Booker T & The MG's Spirit (SideBar)



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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25 3:30PM

**The Nut Tapper
 Christmas Show** Family Show

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30 8PM

Bob Schneider

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**Irish Christmas in
 America**

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2 7PM

On Big Shoulders
Album Release Show
 featuring Matt Brown, Steve Dawson, Brian Wilkie,
 Aaron Smith, Gerald Dowd, Liz Chidester,
 Liam Davis, Elise Bergman, Anna Jacobson,
 Evan Jacobson and Keely Vasquez

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7 8PM
 SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8 8PM

**Richard Thompson
 Electric Trio** at Thalia Hall,
 1807 S Allport St

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8 8PM
 SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9 4 & 7PM

The Lone Bellow
TRIIIIO /// Acoustic Tour
 with special guest Robert Ellis

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10 8PM
 FRIDAY, JANUARY 11 8PM

Isabella Rossellini Link Link
 Circus

SUNDAY, JANUARY 13 7PM

Kathy Mattea

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24 8PM

**Sammy Miller and
 The Congregation**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31 7PM

Kasey Chambers
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MUSIC

continued from 33
 by bands such as Dinosaur Jr. and Deftones; even Williams's short-circuit screams on the chorus for "Chains," off Chastity's recent *Death Lust* (Captured Tracks), contain a boisterousness that could energize Blackhawks fans more than "Chelsea Dagger." In 2018, *Death Lust* feels like an earnest gut punch of a punk album that just happens to be filled with should-be arena-rock hits. —**LEOR GALIL**

JUDITH HAMANN *Julian Terrell Otis opens.*
 8:30 PM, *Constellation*, 3111 N. Western, \$10. 18+.

Shaking can be an involuntary reaction to a one-sided relationship: you scare me, I shake. Likewise, Australian cellist Judith Hamann's *Shaking Studies* is intentional, dialogic, and intimate. The set-length program includes passages that investigate various pulsing or vibrational aspects of playing, including rhythm, tremor, vibrato, and wolf tones—overtones that occur when a bowed note matches the resonating frequency of an instrument. In conventional practice cellists try to avoid wolf tones, sometimes by squeezing the instrument between their knees to suppress vibrations. But Hamann deliberately summons the effect, which in turn exposes her to being shaken by her cello's vibrations. Her two album releases explore similar phenomena. On last year's *Gossamers* (Caduc), Hamann and saxophonist Rosalind Hall juxtapose overtones to hair-raising effect. And on composer Tashi Wada's 2014 effort *Duets* (Saltern), she and fellow cellist Charles Curtis take Wada's provocatively simple score—one line drawn diagonally across a music staff—as a chance to instigate four slow-motion explorations of close harmony and coarse dissonance. An opening performance from tenor vocalist Julian Terrell Otis includes Julius Eastman's "Our Father" and Ben Patterson's "Duo for String Instrument and Voice." —**BILL MEYER**



Judith Hamann  COURTESY THE ARTIST



Brandon Summers of the Helio Sequence
 ANA PUPULIN

SIR CHARLES JONES *Anton Drain and Soul Street Collective open.* 4:30 PM, *the Dorchester*, 1515 E. 154th, Dolton, \$40. 21+

Vocalist Sir Charles Jones is one of the leading lights in contemporary southern soul-blues. He comports himself well in the dance-floor work-outs and celebrations of down-home cultural identity that are typical of the genre (2008's "I Came to Party" and 2012's "Good Old Country Boy" are good examples), but his true metier is the pleading, lovelorn ballad. His latest album, *The Masterpiece*, which he self-released on his Southern King Entertainment label, contains a few run-of-the-mill hoochie-man boasts, such as "Wherever I Lay My Bone," but he redeems them with some of the finest ballads he's ever recorded, including "Destiny," which features a neo-Barry White, sex-machine-with-a-heart-of-gold spoken narration, and "Squeeze Me," a broken-hearted plea from an unsatisfied lover. But the record's highest point is "100 Years": backed by an acoustic guitar, piano, and what sound like real strings, Jones summons a vulnerability-laced croon as he delivers lyrics that might have been lifted from any long-gone "golden age" of teen-dream love anthems—he even name-checks Romeo and Juliet. In his live performances, Jones toughens his sexiness with swaggering body language and stage patter, but he still comes across like a man on a mission to rehabilitate the classic soul love ballad, which is surely a bold, even quixotic notion in our irony-besotted age. —**DAVID WHITEIS**

MONDAY26

DEAD SOUTH *Elliot Brood and Del Suelo open.*
 8:30 PM, *Thalia Hall*, 1807 S. Allport, \$21-\$61. 17+

Don't let the name fool you—the Dead South are actually from the far north. Regina, Saskatchewan, to be exact. Over the course of three albums of hard-scrabble folk and bluegrass, the group have built up a following through the most modern of methods,

including viral videos like “Banjo Odyssey,” which follows them as they literally bring their show on the road, serenading Toronto from the bed of a moving truck. Despite their 21st-century digital media savvy, the product they’re pushing was built through old-fashioned musicianship and immersing themselves in the North American string-band tradition, in all its bloodstained glory. Are the members of the Dead South hipster hair farmers playing retro for the artisanal distillery crowd? Absolutely. But they’re also irresistible, and they earn their keep with truly distinctive touches, such as metal-inflected banjo and “fiddling” on a cello (the band’s cellists, Danny Kenyon and Erik Mehlsen, have been known to strap the instrument across their bodies like a guitar). They’re road dogs with a flexible auxiliary cast depending on who’s available, and while their albums hit hard, they butter their bread onstage. —MONICA KENDRICK

WEDNESDAY28

HELIO SEQUENCE *Wild Pink opens. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$18, \$16 in advance. 21+*

The Helio Sequence, formed in 1999 by Brandon Summers and Benjamin Weikel, in Beaverton, Oregon, have spent the past two decades pushing the boundaries of indie-pop. The duo’s first handful of releases walk the line between digital and organic, their songs boiling over with layers of bubbly synth, bright guitars, and harsh static. They’re the type of records you can get lost in, like shoegaze rock for a new era. But starting with 2008’s *Keep Your Eyes Ahead* (Sub Pop) the Helio Sequence have given themselves more breathing room—while still surreal and challenging, the

songs on that album rely more on melodic sophistication and structure than on heady ambience and unhinged volume. And for its ten-year anniversary last month, Sub Pop released a deluxe edition that includes demos and alternate takes that offer up a view into how Summers and Weikel first pieced together those complex compositions. *Keep Your Eyes Ahead* might not be heralded as an indie-rock classic just yet, but revisiting it shows the mark it’s made on the indie-rock world, and just how effortlessly Summers and Weikel mix the poppy and the weird. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

LEFTOVER CRACK, NEGATIVE APPROACH
Crazy & the Brains and Still Alive open. 8 PM, Metro, 3730 N. Clark, \$20, \$17 in advance. 18+

You know what sounds like a terrifyingly wild idea? Pack the Metro full of the rabid Leftover Crack and Negative Approach fans, set them up in the middle of the venue’s floor, and let ‘er rip. Leftover Crack’s fusion of ska with anarcho-crust punk has aged about as well as a torn-open bag of Franzia, but they’ll bring some major house-show energy to the historic club, and their devotees will come out in droves for the experience. The highlight of the night is the main support act, pioneering hardcore band Negative Approach; a regular on the reunion circuit since their performance at Touch and Go Records 25th anniversary festival in 2006 (as of 2018, their second act is already three times longer than their initial run from 1981 to ‘84). The Detroit foursome haven’t released any new music since, but they don’t need to: their catalogue is perfect, furious hardcore with no frills or fuss, delivered to this day with unparalleled anger and intensity. There’s no better way to see a band like this than in a setting where artist and audience literally collide. —LUCA CIMARUSTI



Leftover Crack © ALAN SNODGRASS



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NEGATIVE APPROACH
CRAZY AND THE BRAINS / STILL ALIVE

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01/17 SNAIL MAIL
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01/25 THE LEMON TWIGS
01/26 THE MAGPIE SALUTE
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WEDNESDAY NOV 21
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LEGAL NOTICE

**STATE OF ILLINOIS
COUNTY OF COOK, ss.**
Circuit Court of Cook County. Public notice is hereby given that a hearing will be held on January 7th, 2019, at 2:00 P.M. in Room 1704, Richard J. Daley Center, 50 W. Washington, Chicago, IL, pursuant to a Petition heretofore filed in the County

Division of said Court as Case Number 2018CONC001315. Said Petition prays for the change of my name from Miriam Gomez to that of Miriam Bahe-na-Cardona Bisby, pursuant to the statute in such case made and provided.
— MIRIAM GOMEZ, Petitioner. (11/22/18)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business. Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: D18155940 on November 16, 2018 Under the Assumed Business Name of MAGILL DESIGN with the business located at: 7710 NORTH EASTLAKE TERRACE APT 1, CHICAGO, IL 60626. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: MEGAN MAGILL WARING 7710 NORTH EASTLAKE TERRACE APT 1 CHICAGO, IL 60626, USA (12/6)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: D18155906 on November 15, 2018. Under the Assumed Business Name of AUDIOBOOK DEPARTMENT with the business located at: 6429 N TALMAN AVE, CHICAGO, IL 60645. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: JUDITH WEST 6429 N TALMAN AVE, CHICAGO, IL 60645, USA (12/6)

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SAVAGE LOVE

Reconsidering relationships

Sage words for women on dating and escorting, sex after trauma, and anal pleasure

Q: I'm a recently divorced single mom and full-time student. I'm really beginning to hurt financially and have decided to start working as an escort. I am at a point of great emotional stability, happiness, and confidence—all reasons that led to my decision—and I'm surrounded by people who love me and won't judge me. (Not that I will be telling most of them.) I've been seeing a man who I like, but I've made it clear that I am not committed to him and can see him only once a week. I've explained that I don't think I can ever be monogamous and I do not want a relationship. He has struggled with this and told me early on he was in love with me. We have AMAZING sex, and I think this causes him to have a hard time understanding why I don't want a relationship. I do not want to tell him I am escorting. I feel the fewer people who know, the better. And I don't know him that well, as I have been "seeing" him for only six months. I know he would want to know, and a huge part of me feels that the right thing to do is be honest with him if I am going to continue seeing him. I also know that cutting him loose would hurt and confuse him, especially without being able to give him a reason. How do I handle this? What is the right thing to do? My site goes live in three days, and what's keeping me up at night is not how best to verify clients, it's what to do about the man in my life who I respect and love, even if I am not in love with him.—**NEW TO ESCORTING**

A: Let's set the escorting issue aside for a moment. You don't want the same things (he wants monogamy and a defined relationship, you don't want any of that shit), you don't feel for him the way he feels for you (he's in love, you're not), and you're a busy single mom and full-time student—all perfectly valid reasons to end a relationship, NTE. You aren't obligated to tell him that something you were thinking about doing but haven't yet done, i.e., escorting, factored into your decision to cut him loose. While I definitely think people have a right to know if their partners are escorts, I don't think people have an absolute right to know if their partners were escorts. So if the sex is really good, and you think

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By Dan Savage

there's a chance you could one day feel as strongly for him as he does for you, and you're planning to escort only until you get your degree, NTE, you could tell him you want to take a break. Explain to him that you don't have the bandwidth for a boyfriend just now—kid, school, work—but you're open to dating him after you're out of school if he's still single and still interested.

Q: I'm a 30-year-old single monogamist and I recently realized I'm bisexual. I feel much happier. Except I recently crossed a line with a very close friend of mine, a man I'll admit to having some romantic feelings for. After he broke up with his ex, I started getting random late-night text messages from him. And a couple weeks ago, we hooked up sans penetration. We acknowledged that we both have feelings but neither of us is in a good place. He's still dealing with the end of his LTR, and I am only just coming out as bisexual. I love this person and our friendship is important to me, but I can't stop thinking of the possibility of us being together. I'm confused by the timing and I wonder if this is real or just something I've allowed to distract me—or both! Also, what would this mean for my bisexuality? I've been to this rodeo before—meaning opposite-sex relationships—but what about the part of me I haven't fully explored? —BETWEEN EVERY THORN SOLITUDE YEARS

A: You describe yourself as a monogamist—so, yeah, entering into a committed relationship with this man would prevent you from exploring your bisexuality. And the timing feels off: he may be on the rebound, and you're still coming to terms with your bisexuality. So don't enter into a committed relationship with him, BETSY, at least not yet. Date him casually and keep hooking up with him, with the understanding—with the explicit and fully verbalized and mutually consented to understanding—that you will be “exploring” your bisexuality, i.e. you'll be getting out there and eating some pussy.

Q: I'm a 37-year-old woman married for eight years to a wonderful man. We're happy and GGG to the point where his kinks have become my kinks and vice versa. However, he loves anal sex and I cannot do it. No matter how much lube we use or how slowly we go, it's not just uncomfortable, it's red-hot-poker-in-my-ass painful. Can you give me any concrete, practical advice to get to a point where I can enjoy anal? —BEYOND UNCOMFORTABLE TUSHY TRAUMA

P.S. Do some women actually enjoy anal? After my experiences, I find that really hard to believe.

A: If you're still interested in exploring anal after all those red-hot-poker-in-your-ass painful experiences—and you are by no means obligated to explore any further—focus on anal stimulation, BUTT, not anal penetration. Try rimming, try a vibrator pressed against your anus (not shoved into it), try running his lubed-up dick up and down your crack (across your anus, not into your anus), and try all of these things during masturbation, vaginal penetration, and oral sex. Having a few dozen orgasms—or a few hundred—while your anus's sensitive nerve endings are pleasurably engaged could create a positive association between anal stimulation and sexual pleasure. It's going to take some time to create a positive association powerful enough to supplant the negative association you have now—an association with echoes of regicide (google “Edward II and red hot poker”)—so your husband shouldn't expect to get his dick back into your butt anytime soon, if he ever will at all. Some people, for reasons physiological or psychological or both, just can't experience pleasure during anal intercourse. If you're one of those people, BUTT, your husband will just have to grieve and move on.

P.S. I find it hard to believe that a woman could possibly enjoy, say, a Donald Trump rally. But some women do, BUTT, and we have video to prove it. The same could be said about anal.

A: I am a 30-year-old hetero woman. Any ideas on how a person can build up to healthy intimate relationships again while recovering from trauma? I'm afraid in normal sexual situations. How can I get to a point where I can have sex for fun and not in a way where I'm triggering my fight-or-flight response? Yes, I am seeing a therapist. —TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE NULLIFYING SEXUAL ENERGY

A: Here's an idea, TENSE, but please run it by your therapist before giving it a try: find a guy you like and propose a different kind of friends-with-benefits arrangement. You will be in charge—you will do all the initiating—and while he can say no to anything you ask, he isn't to ask for or initiate anything himself. You set the menu, you make the rules, you give the orders. He'll need to be someone you trust, and it'll help if he's someone who thinks following orders is sexy—and trust me, TENSE, those guys are out there. You said that normal sexual situations aren't working for you. Maybe an abnormal one would? 📧

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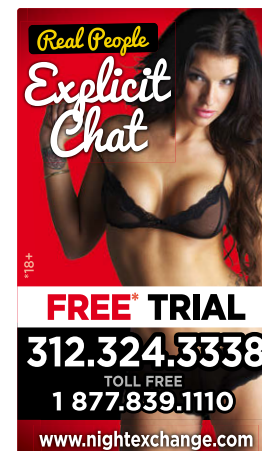
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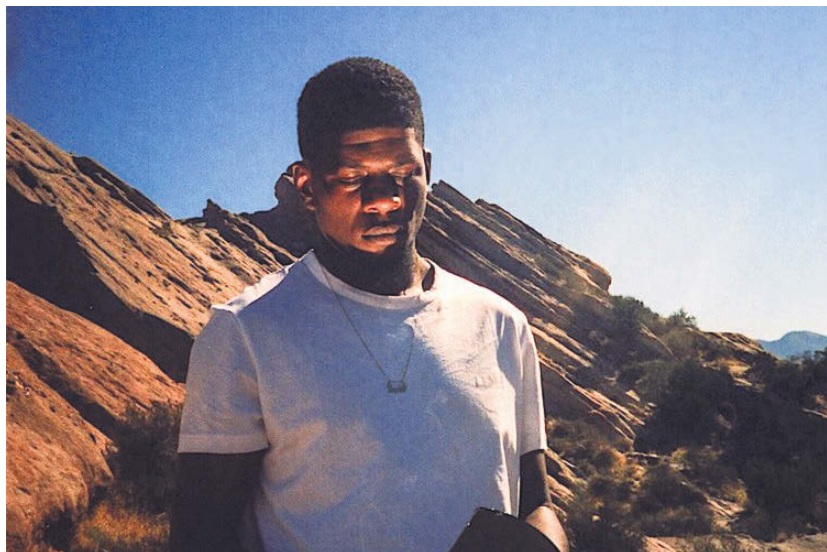
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Jon Bellion 7/19, 7 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion
Billy Strings 1/25, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Black Queen, Uniform 3/16, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Bodeans 12/26, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 🍷
Joe Bonamassa 3/8, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Boombox Cartel 2/16, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 17+
Brasstracks 2/7, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Patrizio Buanne 2/13, 8 PM, City Winery 🍷
Michael Buble 3/17, 8 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Cannibal Corpse, Morbid Angel, Necrot 3/4, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Tyler Carter 1/8, 7:30 PM, Beat Kitchen, on sale Fri 11/23, 11 AM, 17+
C.J. Chenier & His Red Hot Louisiana Band 1/18, 9 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn, Fri 11/23, 11 AM
Kelly Clarkson 2/22, 7 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Clutch 3/13, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Cypress Hill, Hollywood Undead 3/12, 6 PM, House of Blues 🍷
Daley, Jmsn 1/23, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Dandy Warhols 5/11, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+
Daughters, Blanck Mass 3/8, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Robert DeLong 2/6, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Dirt Monkey, Megalodon 2/17, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Excision 3/30, 8 PM, Navy Pier, 18+

Melanie Fiona 1/19, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery 🍷
Hot Flash Heat Wave 3/1, 9 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+
Hypocrisy, Fleshgod Apocalypse 4/5, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Mick Jenkins 2/2, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Valerie June 4/22, 7:30 PM, Park West, 18+
Lando Chill, Vic Spencer, Ajani Jones 12/27, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Lil Mokey 4/4, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall 🍷
Shaed 2/24, 7 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Kodie Shane 3/13, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 18+
Thin Lips 1/31, 7:30 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Zomboy 2/8, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

UPDATED

Slander 12/14-15, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, second show added, 18+

UPCOMING

Action Bronson, Meyhem Lauren 2/23, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
All Time Low 12/21, 7:30 PM, House of Blues 🍷
David August 2/16, 10 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Beirut, Helado Negro 2/22, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Taylor Bennett 12/22, 7 PM, Metro 🍷
Bully 12/31, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Cannabis Corpse 12/10, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Mariah Carey 3/11, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre

Cave 1/17, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, 18+
Kasey Chambers 1/31, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 🍷
Charly Bliss 1/16, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, part of Tomorrow Never Knows, 18+
Christopher Cross 3/19-20, 8 PM, City Winery 🍷
Crystal Lake 2/18, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+
Dead Horses, Brother Brothers 2/1, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 🍷
Iris DeMent 2/2, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 🍷
Direct Hit!, Copyrights 1/26, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Disturbed 3/8, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Drab Majesty 11/29, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Dream Theater 3/29, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Flasher 12/4, 9 PM, Hideout
Flat Five 2/14, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 🍷
Fleetwood Mac 3/1, 8 PM, United Center
Flesh Eaters 3/10, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall
Fotocrime, Luggage 12/3, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle **FREE**
Marty Friedman 2/13, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Gang of Youths, Gretta Ray 12/14, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Art Garfunkel 12/14, 8 PM, City Winery 🍷
Jose Gonzalez & the String Theory 3/28, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Good Old War, Beta Radio 12/8, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
David Gray 6/13, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Guided by Voices 12/31, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge
Guster, Saintseneca 4/13, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+

Haelos 3/28, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall 🍷
The Head & the Heart, Mt. Joy 12/6, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre 🍷
Dave Hollister 12/3, 7 PM, City Winery 🍷
Julia Holter 2/28, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Hood Internet 12/31, 9 PM, Subterranean
Peter Hook & the Light 11/1, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Icarus the Owl 12/6, 7 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Interpol 2/7, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre
Brendan Kelly 12/1, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Kimbra 12/5, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Emily King 2/1, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
King Tuff, Stonefield 1/26, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
King's X 12/9, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Kiss 3/2, 7:30 PM, United Center
Lawrence Arms 12/13-15, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Lemon Twigs 1/25, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Lotus 12/30-31, 9 PM, Park West, 18+
Jeff Lynne's ELO 6/27, 8 PM, United Center
Macabre 12/22, 6:30 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
MadeinTYO 3/1, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Mannequin Men, Acquaintances 12/15, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Massive Attack 3/23, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Mineral, Tancred 1/24, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall
Misfits, Fear, Venom Inc. 4/27, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Bob Mould Band 2/22-23, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Kacey Musgraves 1/31, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Graham Nash 3/17, 7 PM, Aethnaeum Theatre 🍷
Native Howl 1/27, 7 PM, Reggie's Music Joint
Panic! At the Disco 2/4, 7 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Parquet Courts 12/3, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+
Pom-Poms 1/12, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Preoccupations, Protomartyr 12/6, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Procol Harum 2/20-21, 8 PM, City Winery 🍷
Queers 12/31, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 18+
Quinn XCII 3/20, 6 PM, Riviera Theatre 🍷
Royal Trux 2/22, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Travis Scott, Trippie Redd 12/6, 7:30 PM, United Center
Sheer Terror 1/12, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 18+
Slackers 11/30-12/2, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+

ALL ALL AGES **FREE**

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Slander 12/14, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Snails 12/7, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+
Soft Moon 1/24, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Musiq Soulchild 1/3-4, 7:30 and 10 PM, City Winery 🍷
Space Jesus 12/31, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Mike Stud 2/1, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge 🍷
Tonight Alive 2/12, 6:30 PM, Bottom Lounge 🍷
Carrie Underwood 10/29, 7 PM, United Center
VHS Collection 3/14, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Adia Victoria 2/25, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+
Kurt Vile & the Violators 12/22, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
VNV Nation 12/1, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+
Ray Volpe 12/20, 8 PM, Chop Shop, 18+
Waco Brothers 2/1, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 🍷
Ryley Walker 12/28, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Warbly Jets 2/15, 9 PM, Schubas
We Banjo 3 3/1, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery 🍷
Weeks, Lonely Biscuits 12/2, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Webb Wilder & the Beatnecks 12/29, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn
Anita Wilson 2/10, 7 PM, City Winery 🍷
Wingtip 1/23, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+
With Confidence, Broadside 12/6, 6 PM, Bottom Lounge 🍷
Zeke Beats 1/12, 8 PM, Subterranean, 18+

SOLD OUT

Alkaline Trio 1/3-6, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Cavetown 12/8, 6:30 PM, Bottom Lounge 🍷
Conan Gray 4/8, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge 🍷
Greta Van Fleet 12/12, 7 PM and 12/14-15, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom 🍷
Beth Hart 4/25, 7:30 PM, Park West, 18+
Ella Mai 3/3, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Robyn 3/6, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre 🍷
Andy Shauf 11/29-30, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Thom Yorke 12/4, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre **FI**



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

GOSSIP WOLF DOESN'T know squat about meteorology, but you don't have to be Tom Skilling to forecast that wherever **Windy City Soul Club** set up their turntables, there's gonna be high humidity and a whole lot of butt shaking! For ten years, WCSC have been getting crowds moving with rare northern-soul 45s—and building massive pyramids out of the beer cans that the DJs and their crew inevitably drain during their legendary six-hour tag-team sets. At this point it's a Chicago rite of passage to have broken up or hooked up at one of WSCS's New Year's Eve or Anti-Valentine's blowouts! At the **Empty Bottle** on Saturday, November 24, the two remaining founders, **Jason Berry** and **Aret Sakalian**, will celebrate by welcoming back original member **Nick Soule**, who moved to Detroit a few years ago.

Chicago DJ, producer, and songwriter **Sunny Woodz** has a way of bringing people together: his 2016 mixtape, *Sunny Side Up*, includes cameos by Saba, Ty Money, Qari, Supa Bwe, Warhol.SS, Chimeka, Dinner With John, and Sunny's old friend Twista. On Friday, November 23, he drops a follow-up, *Sunny Woodz Roll Up!*, and celebrates at **Cairo Ale House** (2009 Franciscan Way, West Chicago) with a bonkers release show—among the 18 guests on the bill are the **Boy Illinois**, **Stunt Taylor**, **UG Vavy**, **White Gzus**, **Big Body Fiji**, and **Asa 2 Times**. Tickets are \$15 and the show starts at 9 PM.

Logan Square arts hub **Comfort Station** threw its annual Beer & Bands fund-raiser in September, but last week the **John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation** made a late donation! Comfort Station executive director **Jordan Martins** says the foundation's \$50,000 grant will facilitate an exchange program with artists in Salvador, Brazil, throughout 2019 and 2020, to “develop collaborative work, compare models of arts organizing, and create discourse around Latinx and Black identity in our respective cities.” Congrats! —J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

3/2ures

MUSIC PAIRED WITH BEER

RUSSIAN CIRCLES / BONGRIPPER
METRO 11/23

HAR MAR SUPERSTAR / SABRINA ELLIS
"DO THE SONGS OF DIRTY DANCING"
THALIA HALL 11/24

FLASHER
THE HIDEOUT 12/4

WACO BROTHERS
SCHUBAS 12/27

CRACKER / CAMPER VANBEETHOVEN
LINCOLN HALL 12/30

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FRI
11/23

5PM-FREE

HARD COUNTRY HONKY TONK WITH
THE HOYLE BROTHERS

TROPA MAGICA

AVANTIST • MÂN CUB • (([SONORAMA])) DJs

WED
11/28

THE HELIO SEQUENCE
WILD PINK

THU
11/29

DRAB MAJESTY

WINGTIPS • FEE LION • THE PIRATE TWINS DJs

THU
11/29

@ SOUTH SHORE CULTURAL CENTER (7059 S. SOUTH SHORE DR.)
RED BULL MUSIC PRESENTS
MAKAYA MCCRAVEN'S UNIVERSAL BEINGS

SAT
11/24

8PM-FREE

'MIRRORED' SERIES
FEAT. ADIAPHORA ORCHESTRA

10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

WINDY CITY SOUL CLUB

SUN
11/25

12PM - FREE

CLINIC VEST PROJECT BRUNCH 2

CHASTITY

MATERIAL GIRLS • NO MEN

FRI
11/30

CULT LEADER
PRIMITIVE WEAPONS • GODMOTHER

MON
11/26

FREE

DUMPSTER TAPES 5-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

FEAT. **CAFE RACER**

GIRL K • EASY HABITS • FAUX FURRS

SAT
12/1

MUTUAL BENEFIT
GABI

TUE
11/27

DEAD FEATHERS

DIAGONAL • DAISY CHAIN

SUN
12/2

WONKY TONK (DUO)
SUNNY WAR

12/3: FOTOCRIME (FREE), 12/4: MOON RUIN, 12/5: CAT MULLINS & THEMBOYS, 12/6: CUBE, 12/7: THE BLOW, 12/8: HANDMADE MARKET (12PM-FREE), 12/9: CORDOBA, 12/10: CAMPDOGZZ (FREE), 12/11: MODERN VICES, 12/12: JESSICA MOSS, 12/13: JOLLYS • TUTU & THE PIRATES, 12/14: DEAD RIDER, 12/15: WINTER RECORD LABEL FAIR (12PM-FREE), 12/15: MANNEQUIN MEN, 12/16: ADRIAN YOUNGE & ALI SHAHEED MUHAMMAD AS THE MIDNIGHT HOUR, 12/18: RUINS, 12/19: SEAN GREEN, 12/21: CONTAINER, 12/27: LANDO CHILL, 12/28: RYLEY WALKER, 12/29: 14TH ANNUAL ALEX CHILTON BIRTHDAY BASH, 12/31: NYE WITH BULLY
NEW ON SALE: 1/6: GOODGRANKIDS, 1/7: THE CURLS, 1/12: THE POM-POMS (KITTY x RICKY EAT ACID), 4/9: THE COATHANGERS, 4/13: ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE • YAMANTAKA // SONIC TITAN, 4/19: DILLY DALLY

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JUST ANNOUNCED

ON SALE AT NOON MONDAY 11.19
ON SALE TO VINOFILE MEMBERS WEDNESDAY 11.21

1.19 MELANIE FIONA

1.21 LET FREEDOM RING, CHICAGO!

A MUSICAL CELEBRATION OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

2.13 PATRIZIO BUANNE

DON'T MISS

11.23 30DB FEAT. JEFF AUSTIN & BRENDAN BAYLISS (OF UMPHREY'S MCGEE)

12.7 SYLEENA JOHNSON

12.9-12 LOS LOBOS - 2 SETS: ACOUSTIC & ELECTRIC

12.30-1.1 AVERY*SUNSHINE - NEW YEAR'S SHOWS



11.26

ANTHONY DAVID
THE SONGS OF BILL WITHERS



11.27

POKEY LAFARGE
WITH HEATHER STYKA



12.1

ANDREW RIPP AND FRIENDS



12.5

JOE PUG
WITH CARSON MCHONE

UPCOMING SHOWS

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 11.28 | CANNED HEAT WITH KEVIN BURT |
| 11.29 | DWELE |
| 11.30 | JANE LYNCH |
| 12.2 | JENNIFER KNAPP & MARGARET BECKER
"HYMNS OF CHRISTMAS" |
| 12.2 | SUZY BOGGUSS |
| 12.3 | DAVE HOLLISTER |
| 12.4 | KRIS ALLEN - SOMETHIN' ABOUT CHRISTMAS |
| 12.6 | THE EMPTY POCKETS HOLIDAY CONCERT |
| 12.9 | CHICAGO PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER
PLAYERS PRESENT: A CHRISTMAS CAROL |
| 12.16 | VIENNA TENG |
| 12.17-18 | TAB BENOIT |
| 12.21-12.23 | MICHAEL MCDERMOTT - MISCHIEF AND
MISTLETOE |
| 12.25 | CHRISTMAS FOR THE JEWS |
| 12.26-27 | SHEMEKIA COPELAND |
| 12.28 & 29 | MACY GRAY |
| 1.3-4 | MUSIQ SOULCHILD |
| 1.5 | TALIB KWELI |
| 1.6 | SONS OF THE NEVER WRONG WITH
MICHAEL SMITH |
| 1.7 | DAN TEDESCO |

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